

Marxism *Today*

August 84

75p

Interview with
Clive Thornton
French Far Right
Stately Homes
**World debt
crisis**
Elvis Costello

**Taking
men on
at their
Games**

Marxism
Today
PRESENTS

November 2/3/4
City University, London

Left Alive

AMONG A GALAXY OF STAR SPEAKERS: Bea Campbell

Göran Therborn, Ros Coward, Jeremy Seabrook, Mick McGahey,

Angela Carter, Stuart Hall, Ken Livingstone, Rosalind Brunt, Bob Rowthorn, Howard Brenton, Gordon McLennan

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THE FRENCH FAR RIGHT

Despite the occasional rhetorical reference to Europe, the recent European elections in France were considered on all sides mainly as a way of measuring the reaction of the electorate to three years of Socialist-Communist administration. After a semi-defeat in the municipal elections a year ago, and repeated by-election failures, the Left has been shown once again to be steadily losing support. With only 32% of the vote the Socialist-Communist alliance is now in the unenviable position of being the most unpopular government – in electoral terms – since the beginning of the Fifth Republic.

Both coalition partners suffered heavy losses compared with the 1981 general election: the Socialists from a landslide 37.5% to 20.7% and the Communists from 16.17% to 11.20%. However, the Socialist vote in 1981 was artificially swollen by Mitterrand's success in the presidential election; the Communists had already registered a sharp decline after averaging just over 20% throughout the 70s.

The full extent of the Communist collapse becomes clearer if we compare the Communist votes in the 1979 European elections with 1984: respectively 4,154,512 and 2,260,973. The PCF leadership, in analysing the decline, has pointed to the discontent among working class and traditionally Communist voters over the present austerity measures of the Mauroy government and the resultant relatively large number of abstentions. However, a major rethink about the role of the PCF in contemporary French society, its policies and the image it projects, now seems highly likely, and vital if the Communist Party wishes to avoid being eliminated from the mainstream of French politics.

The other significant feature of these elections has been the re-emergence of a strong ultra-Right current for the first time since the Poujadist movement of the mid-50s. With a score of 10.95% Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the neo-fascist Front National, and himself a former Poujadist member of parliament and OAS activist, has made a spectacular comeback into parliamentary politics – hardly familiar ground for his organisation which over the last ten years has made a name for itself on the fringe of constitutional politics by virulent and sometimes physical attacks on immigrant workers, and by fanatical anti-Communism (the Front National was founded in 1972 after the banning of the



infamous Occident group, most of whose members joined the Front).

Several factors help to explain the Front's rise. The radicalisation of the traditional right wing parliamentary parties and their adoption of some of the rhetoric of the ultra-Right – particularly on issues such as immigration and law and order – have helped to make the ideas of the Front more respectable. Indeed in last year's municipal elections the two parties of the parliamentary Right entered a political alliance with it in the town of Dreux.

Undoubtedly the violent activism of some traditional supporters of the right – in particular the non-salaried middle strata – and their adoption of extra-parliamentary action with the encouragement of the neo-Gaullist RPR, have also pushed these groups into the arms of the Front extremists. And the lack of mobilisation of the Left, in particular against the rise of racism in the main urban centres, has undoubtedly facilitated Le Pen's success.

A brief examination of the June election results and of opinion polls carried out during and after the campaign make it possible to identify more precisely who voted for the Front National and to eliminate some of the more superficial and tendentious interpretations.

It is clear that Le Pen and his group have made greatest headway in the urban centres, while their support in rural areas remains marginal. The Front took 21.4% of the vote in Marseilles, overtaking both the Socialist and Communist Parties in a traditionally left wing stronghold: its score was 15.2% in Paris and 17% in Lyons. In what was considered the 'red belt' around Paris the Front has built on its initial successes in the municipal elections last year, with 15.98% in Seine Saint Denis, 14.62% in Val de Marne and 14.14% in Hauts de Seine. Le Pen's appeal to irra-

tional gut reactions over the presence of immigrant workers and the problem of 'security' in the big housing estates has been successful in working class areas where the percentage of immigrant workers is high.

However, as the SOFRES poll carried out among Le Pen voters on the evening after the election has shown, the success of the Front National is mainly due to a redistribution within the Right and not, as some hasty commentators have claimed, to a transfer of traditionally left wing, and in particular Communist, voters. Only 11% of Le Pen's voters (about 1% of all voters in the election) said they had formerly voted for one of the Left parties, whereas 25% were former supporters of the RPR.

A social breakdown of Le Pen's supporters, based again on the results of the SOFRES poll, shows that the Front has succeeded in gaining a foothold among the more virulent of the support-strata of the Right, that is those most involved in direct action against the Left government. 14% of shopkeepers and artisans voted for Le Pen, but support remains relatively weak among the unemployed and the working class.

Optimistic observers have suggested that Le Pen's success, like that of Poujade, may only be a flash in the pan, a protest vote which will drift back towards the main parliamentary parties in the next election. The organisational strength of the Front and the growing tide of racism among large sectors of French society argue against such facile optimism. It may be true that Le Pen and the Front activists now constitute a serious handicap for the RPR and the UDF who contributed so directly to their electoral success – the anti-Jewish and anti-Arab diatribes of the Front leaders may scare centrist opinion away from the Right.

But this can be no consolation for the

Left. Only a thorough reappraisal of the impact of racist politics, and of the causes of the Front's success, followed by resolute anti-racist mobilisation, can reverse what could well become a deep-rooted and dangerous political trend in French society.

Keith Dixon

MUNICIPAL MILITANCY

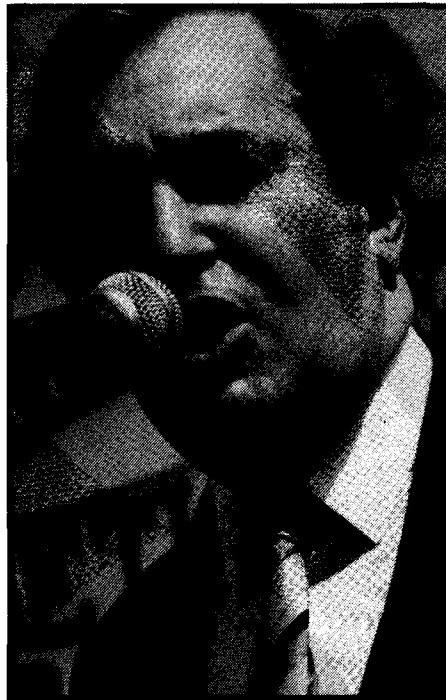
On the great scoreboard in the sky of the big match between central and local government, the state of play so far is writ large: Local 2, National 0.

First, the victory in the Lords on the cancellation of the 1985 elections for the GLC and the metropolitan counties ensured another year in office for the Labour administrations. This will give them the opportunity to make the transition even more difficult, despite the constraints imposed by the revamped 'Paving' Bill.

Secondly, the government's extraordinary cave-in to the Liverpool militants has given local councils on the rate-capping hit-list a strong incentive to fight hard in the expectation that the legislation can be seen off unused in the same way as the 'secondary picketing' laws have not been brought to bear against the miners. As Thatcher herself said, the concessions in themselves were small. But, because of the punitive rate support grant system, for every £1 the government gave back to Liverpool, another £2 is saved in penalties, thereby tripling the value of the concessions. Much more significant than the money itself, is the very fact of the government having been seen not only to negotiate, a novelty in itself, but also to have bugged at least an inch or two. For the Labour councillors who have been to Marsham St begging for money countless times in the last five years, it's a green light for the tactics of confrontation. The anger of *The Times* editorial the following day (July 11) testifies to the significance of the climbdown: 'Today in Liverpool municipal militancy is vindicated . . . What matters is not so much the size of Mr Jenkin's concession but the example set . . . By exempting Liverpool from the consequences of spending above its target the government subverts its whole local government financial policy of the past four years: it issues an open invitation to councils to say the caps don't fit and they won't wear them'.

The Liverpool victory returns the focus of the fight between the Labour-controlled

local authorities and the Thatcher government back into the arena where it will be won or lost – ratecapping. The issue of abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties is in many respects a symbolic one. As GLC leader Ken Livingstone freely admits, their retention would be a hollow victory if they were then subject to rate-capping. At the Labour Party's local government conference in Sheffield in early July, the local authority bigwigs thrashed out a united strategy. That was a triumph in itself, as past attempts at working out common tactics between local councils with very different circumstances, each led by local politicians used to ruling the roost in their personal fiefdoms, have foundered at the first hint of a real confrontation.



Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight explains the implications of rate-capping to members of his work-force at a joint Council/Union meeting, Clapham Common, July 4, 1984.

But this time there was what one press officer called a 'massive outbreak of unity'. The only discord came from the old right, most of whom were clever enough to keep their mouths shut in public – Birmingham's Dick Knowles was the only one to publicly oppose the agreed line. The plan is for all authorities to work out their budgets in the normal way and to publicise them widely as a publicity tactic. They will refuse to go through the procedure for negotiation created by the legislation because it gives the government powers to specify what the council should spend its money on. Instead, they will refuse to set a rate for the 1985/6 financial year, as Liverpool did this year.

The advantage of that tactic, as Liverpool discovered, is that it is not illegal. Although Liverpool clearly incurred extra expenditure because of its four month delay in setting a rate (see *New Statesman*, 8 June, p 6) no-one challenged the council and even the local Tories backed off from a confrontation.

However, there are still several pitfalls for the councils on the hit list in keeping a united stance. The aim is to ensure that they all go into crisis at the same time, making the government take them all on simultaneously rather than pick off individual authorities. To surcharge and bar from office 30 people in one area is quite feasible as the Clay Cross councillors discovered 11 years ago. But the thought of doing it to 400 councillors in authorities scattered round Britain must be causing Patrick Jenkin – or his successor – nightmares. But the upper tier authorities (county councils and ILEA) must set a rate by March 10 1985, whereas there is nothing in law to say when other councils have to do so, a loophole exploited to the full by Liverpool. Therefore, the GLC and other counties will have to opt for a variant of the strategy: deficit spending, ie, not matching the budget to the rate-capped income. For these authorities, the crunch will come later – around Christmas 1985 rather than in the early summer – as their money starts to run out.

Secondly, as the risk of personal surcharges loom nearer, some councillors will undoubtedly want to opt out. In Liverpool, the six who did became an irrelevance when the local elections returned Labour with a boosted 17-seat majority. Other Labour groups might find it harder to make dissenters toe the line.

Thirdly, there is the attitude of the Labour front bench. In June, Kinnock was quite happy to recommend Liverpool accepting a deal which involved a 60% rate rise. In the event, they got away with 17%. One of Labour's front bench, Jack Straw, has argued privately that some form of non-compliance is necessary. But it would strengthen the resolve of the Labour groups enormously if the NEC's statement on local government to be given to the October Labour Party conference supported the defiant line adopted in Sheffield.

But most important of all, the hit list councils can learn an important lesson from the GLC. The effectiveness of the campaign both through the medium of advertising and publicity (see *Channel Five*), and by a continuous raising of the issue at a grass roots level, has un-

doubtedly contributed to the GLC's success so far.

Campaigning is not, as ILEA leader Francis Morrell put it 'simply a matter of a press conference and a few leaflets. It's using the full resources of our authorities to mobilise mass support through public meetings, door-knocking, petitions and so on.' ILEA is fortunate in being genuinely popular.

Councils like Islington, the current butt of the media and Lambeth, have a long way to go in improving their image. Liverpool's voters were twice given the opportunity to reject Liverpool's militant line and backed it both times. At the moment, other authorities, notably Islington where the SDP won two out of three by-elections in October last year, are not in favour. They need to be to have any chance of winning the rate capping fight.

Christian Wolmar

ARTIFICIAL REPRODUCTION

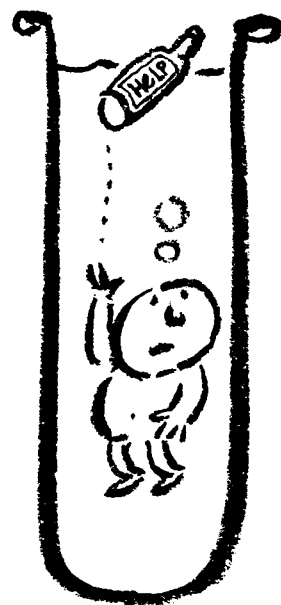
For months, sensationalist newspaper headlines on test tube babies, baby trading, frozen embryos, sex selection and brave new scientists have marked a public debate on reproductive technologies, whilst behind closed doors, the Warnock Committee has conducted its own enquiry into artificial reproduction. Now, after 18 months, the 16-member committee of doctors, scientists, lawyers and lay people have handed over their report to Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler.

Recent developments in human fertilisation and embryology (in particular *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF), artificial insemination by donor (AID) and surrogate motherhood) raise important social, ethical and legal questions of the benefits and costs, both for individuals and for society as a whole, which must be carefully weighed.

Extensively leaked, the report recommends legislation to ban commercial

surrogate motherhood agencies, to impose controls on embryo research and to make children born to married couples by artificial insemination by donor legitimate. It also recommends that a permanent national licensing body should be established to monitor developments in reproductive technology and to advise the Government on permissible practice. All hospitals and clinics which provide IVF treatment are to be licensed and open to inspection by the licensing body. The same applies to hospitals and clinics providing AID, and sperm donors are to be prohibited from fathering more than ten children. Embryo research is to be limited to 14 days after fertilisation. The Committee has also given its approval to the freezing of embryos without specifying a time limit.

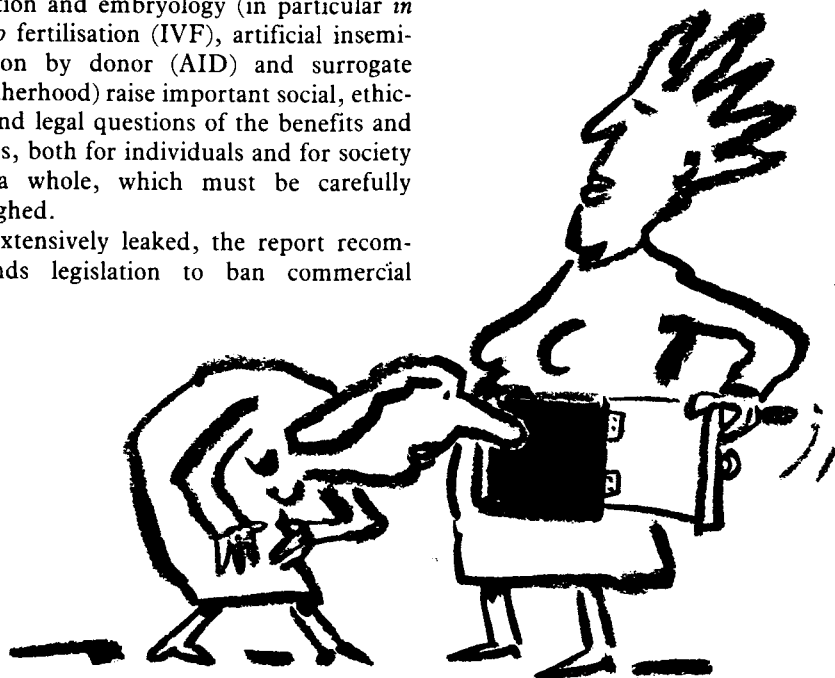
These major recommendations disguise some serious divisions within the Committee concerning surrogate motherhood and embryo research. A minority advocated that surrogate motherhood should be permitted in exceptional cases when arranged by non-profit making adoption agencies under the control of the licensing body. Surrogate motherhood, they argue, is already with us and cannot effectively be banned; it should therefore be regulated in those cases where it offers the only hope of a child to a childless couple. Another serious split concerns embryo research. Only a bare majority of the 16 members agree that research should be carried out on embryos, whether created for research purposes or as 'spare' embryos. One minority opposes all research on embryos, and another argues that 'spare' embryos



should be used only with parents' permission.

Despite the lack of unanimity within the Committee, the report is, by any standards, a liberal blueprint for the development and practice of new technologies. As such, it has done little to allay the fears of those who believe that life starts at conception. Now the burden of responsibility rests with Parliament. An uneasy situation for Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler, who is caught between the 'pro-life' lobby, supported by the majority of Tory backbenchers, who oppose research on embryos on the same grounds as they oppose abortion, and the lay and professional bodies who support Warnock's recommendations. The report comes at a particularly sensitive time for the Government. The DHSS memorandum which advises doctors that they may prescribe contraception for under-age girls without their parents' consent in exceptional cases is under threat. Fowler must steer clear of including legislative proposals from the Warnock Report in the Queen's Speech if he is to keep the 'pro-life'/anti-embryo research lobby at bay. Otherwise he may risk a backlash and lose the battle over contraceptive guidance for under-age girls. But such a delaying tactic would not please the large body of opinion which thinks the Government should act urgently to legislate on the issues raised by the report, rather than leaving it in the hands of a private member's Bill.

Beyond the excitement and challenges posed by the new reproductive technology lie a barrage of social and ethical implications, of questions of resources and of the meaning of infertility. It seems that the debate over the priority to be given to the rights of sperm donor, ovum donor, womb



leaser, would-be parents, embryo and child is endless. Yet the assumptions behind the new technology and its importance in the spectrum of health care has scarcely been questioned at all.

One in eight couples have a problem with infertility. New techniques like surrogate pregnancies and IVF will not offer a solution to the majority of infertile women and men, who suffer ovulatory problems, blocked fallopian tubes or a poor sperm count. In the glamour of new techniques – and ones which are almost exclusively undertaken within the private sector – it is salutary to remember that infertility treatment is one of the most under-resourced specialisms in medicine. Preventive work and infertility treatments should come in the list of health care priorities, new developments in embryology should take place primarily within the NHS. Who is to guarantee that resources are equitably distributed between infertility treatments and preventive measures? And how are we to ensure that would-be parents have equal access to the treatment they need?

And, in a broader context, the scientific and ethical implications of therapeutic techniques on the group for whom they are intended, the parents themselves, largely remain unchallenged outside the women's movement. Is the emphasis on new technologies helping to undermine the status of childless women and men? What concept of parenthood drives men and, more often, women to undergo lengthy and invasive treatments, with very little chance of success, in order to have a child which is born of their sperm or ovum, or carried in the would-be mother's womb? The present re-evaluation of the structures of the family and the limitations of individualist assumptions of social relations has not been recognised in this debate.

The decisions and the financial power behind scientific research are largely in the hands of government, universities and multi-national companies. Reproductive technology has become big business for a largely male profession. Can we trust them to be the midwives of our brave new world?

Ruth Evans

INDIA – A CRISIS OF IDENTITY?

Recent events in India, particularly the Indian army's assault on the Golden Temple at Amritsar and the subsequent hijacking of a plane to Pakistan, have all made

headline news. Events such as these are an important pointer to the present political situation in India, where a general election must be called some time this year.

Indira Gandhi's Congress Party was swept back into power in January 1980, winning 352 of the 544 seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house). Subsequent elections to various state legislatures however suggest that a similar degree of support would not be forthcoming now. While the Congress Party is in no state to fight an election at present, Mrs Gandhi's main asset seems to be the weakness and division of the opposition. However, there are indications that the opposition parties could potentially become more united than at any time in the recent past.

In May 1983 the first of a series of opposition party meetings took place, attended by 13 parties, including 6 regional ones, and the two Communist Parties. The initial meeting adopted a rather bland statement expressing concern at threats to the unity of India posed by regional movements; the erosion of political morality, particularly where the Congress is concerned; and the need for a revision of centre-state relations. By the beginning of this year, at the fourth and fifth opposition parties' meetings, more detailed resolutions elaborating on these themes, and linking them to a programme of economic reforms, were adopted. No one has claimed that these meetings constitute an electoral alliance, but they are clearly helping to define the issues which an anti-Congress electoral alliance would take up.

Since Mrs Gandhi's return to power in 1980 the economy has performed neither spectacularly badly, nor particularly well. But persistent and increasing economic hardship, especially for the 40% plus below the official poverty line, is one of the main factors underlying what is undoubtedly the most serious problem facing India today – the question of the relationship between the central and state governments. Opposition parties of all hues argue that the states' powers have been whittled away in the years since independence, a process helped by the Congress Party's domination over both central and state legislatures for much of the period. More recently, non-Congress governments have come to power in the states and find themselves dependent on Delhi for final ratification of certain state laws, and for important elements of their finance. The Left Front government of West Bengal, for example, has been waiting for several years for ratification of land



reform bills, held up for no apparent reason.

Early last year, after 10 years or more of the question being raised, particularly by the CPI(M), a government commission into centre-state relations has been set up to examine these constitutional questions. However, the tension between the Congress central government and state opposition governments is only one of the forms

the centre-state questions takes. The other form is mass agitation, often accompanied by violence against representatives of central authority. The most important of these movements have been in Assam, and more recently, Punjab.

The current phase of agitation among Sikhs in Punjab can be dated to the middle of 1982, although many of the issues have been the subject of fruitless discussions over the last 15 years. In 1982 the Akali Dal – a regional, predominantly Sikh party – put forward several demands covering both Sikh religious issues, and secular questions concerning the whole of Punjab. Among the latter were questions concerning the distribution of land and water resources between Punjab and neighbouring Haryana (carved out of Punjab in 1966), the transfer of the city of Chandigarh to Punjab, and the question of more autonomy for the state.

At this stage a minority in the Akali Dal, under the leadership of Bhindranwale, wanted to pursue several more extreme and socially divisive demands. One of these was for the creation of Punjab as a Sikh majority state, although Sikhs are already 60% of the state population, and included ideas like the disenfranchisement of migrant labourers in the state, and the

creation of a fully autonomous state – Khalistan. However, in late 1982 and early 1983 the Akali Dal leadership was able to contain these demands from within its ranks, and to support an attempt to negotiate a solution to Punjab's problems with the central government.

The Akali Dal leaders' stance was not helped by the attitude of the Congress Party – the ruling power in the state at that time, as well as in Delhi. Initially the Congress refused to talk, and Akali Dal leaders and activists were arrested. Later however, agreement was reached, on everything except on some of the political issues, on two separate occasions; but each time the central government apparently refused to proceed to complete the agreement.

In the meantime, from early in 1983, the more extreme Sikhs under Bhindranwale launched a campaign of terror at first in Punjab, and later towards the end of the year in the capital itself. By the end of the year, with no talks taking place, and all emphasis on the terrorist movement, the central government began to categorise the problem as one of individual terrorist acts. It was a short step from this to the decision to restore control by sending the army into the Golden Temple. The results of the

failure to reach a political solution earlier in the year were that there was little option but to engage in a confrontation which was bound to inflame Sikh feelings and unite them to a greater extent than before. Now, over a month after the army went in, troops are still on the streets of Amritsar, Sikh terrorists are still capable of hijacking a plane, and the original issues behind the crisis remain totally unresolved.

The next stages in the conflict in Punjab are not yet clear – perhaps there will be more violence, or perhaps the discussions will resume once more, and conflict will move from the streets back to the committee rooms, as in Assam. Whatever happens next, these conflicts clearly indicate that India's political development has reached a critical stage. The Congress Party's strategy of maintaining Indian unity by the dominance of the centre has been tried once before – by the British, and we know where that led to. Whether the forthcoming elections (assuming they are called) will result in the return of the Congress Party to power, or the emergence of a political coalition with different plans for tackling the present political crisis will probably set the stage for Indian political life for the rest of the century.

Charles Ashleigh

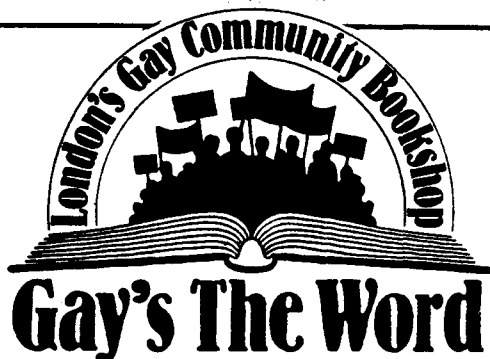
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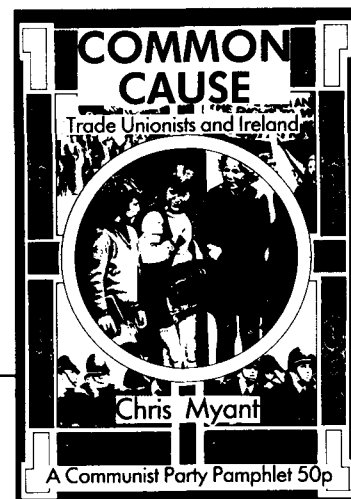
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PHOTOGRAPHS OF A BEAMING president Samora Machel of Mozambique shaking hands with South Africa's P W Botha flashed around the world five months ago after the two men had signed the mutual non-aggression pact at Nkomati. United States diplomacy had produced a watershed in Africa's history comparable in drama to the coup in Portugal ten years earlier which brought the Marxist parties of Frelimo and the MPLA to power in two of Southern Africa's most important countries — Mozambique and Angola.

The man behind the scenes at Nkomati was Dr Chester Crocker, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Africa — a clever and tenacious politician. For four years he has doggedly beavered away to give Ronald Reagan a pre-election foreign policy success on a continent of such small interest to this US administration that the Secretary of State cannot even remember the names of the capitals.

Dr Crocker's ambitious plan was a jigsaw with four main elements interlinked: an end to the undeclared wars raging across Southern Africa; Cuba's troops in Angola ousted; Namibia independent under a pro-western capitalist government; and the Marxist Frelimo and MPLA parties as part of the economic constellation of states focused around the US strategic ally — white-ruled South Africa.

Constructive engagement

Central to Crocker's ambitious strategy to alter the history of Southern Africa was the US imperative need to stabilise South Africa. The method was to be Crocker's theory of 'constructive engagement' put into practice. When he was still an academic at Georgetown University Dr Crocker spelt out his 'Strategy for Change' in South Africa in an article in *Foreign Affairs*. 'Constructive engagement' was his recipe for 'evolutionary change as distinguished from a revolutionary cataclysm.' The African National Congress and its armed struggle for the freedom of South Africa was a threat which had to be countered.

Like the logical careful academic that he is Crocker in his paper built up the US case for closer diplomatic and economic ties with South Africa. Disengagement he said was not a possibility. The only chance of change was through many more carrots with some sticks in reserve. His logic did not address the illogical centrepiece of South African government policy — apartheid and bantustans. Dr Crocker apparently believed that apartheid would slowly wither away through reforms

The recent accord between South Africa and Mozambique is the most dramatic development in African politics for a decade. It is a change of tactics for South Africa for Mozambique and a change of tactics for South Africa for Mozambique. This set of agreements, of which this was only part, a few months ago.

Redrawing the Map of Southern Africa in Ten Years

Victoria Brittain

pushed by a new appreciation in South Africa of US 'democratic systems and multi-racial society.' The ending of South Africa's pariah status in the world community would, he thought, increase the momentum of internal reform.

The long term US goal in South Africa which underlies all Crocker's initiatives is of course stability for its \$14 billion worth of private investment. A stable repressive capitalist multi-racial or black government, such as Haiti's or Malawi's, which would ensure the same kind of rate of profit on investment as apartheid has produced would be as acceptable to Washington as Mr Botha is.

South Africa and the US

This is an underlying contradiction between the US and its racist ally. The white South African government has, of course, the very different goal of its own survival with its central policy — apartheid — intact.

The two allies' interests are identical for as long as South Africa's racist government is not too seriously challenged by instability inside the country, and also remains the dominant economic power in the southern half of the continent.

For ten destructive years after the independence of Mozambique and Angola South African-run, and US-backed, destabilisation of black African states which have shown resistance to the domination of their economies by western institutions has been the chosen political process to achieve the western allies' economic and strategic goals.

Until about a year ago the South African tactics of repression of blacks at home; military and political stalemate in Namibia under an illegal 100,000 man army of

occupation; and the progressive destabilisation of its neighbours suited both Pretoria and Washington fairly well. Both looked forward confidently to a let-up in the strain in the area with the collapse of the Frelimo and MPLA governments.

But that destructive policy option was increasingly expensive in terms both of cash and of US international relations. Also, Crocker believed it always carried the risk of an increasing Soviet commitment in the area which might swing the military balance against South Africa. And, most important in his approach to the hardline South African government, he argued that the ten years of attrition had brought black Southern Africa to its knees — negotiations would be on South Africa's terms.

South Africa's acquiescence

The US idea of changing the all-out destruction strategy for diplomacy was slowly accepted by South Africa. This year the country's military budget was \$4 billion. The cost of the military campaign in Namibia alone last year was \$1 billion. (The same as the IMF's notorious loan to Pretoria last year.) The 45 multinational companies operating in Namibia were beginning to complain that the war was hurting profits. And some of the same powerful business interests within South Africa itself were beginning to question future stability and profitability of enterprises increasingly dogged by labour unrest and the tension following government crackdowns on the new political force, the United Democratic Front. The UDF was formally launched last August and is the most formidable political organisation the white South African government has had to deal with for 20 years because of its

bique was the
 . It marked a setback
 Africa. But
 : on looks rather unstable.

Front Line: Transition

grassroots support and the moderate image of its membership. The organisations grouped inside the UDF include churches and trade unions. The UDF's successful open campaign against the South African government's 'reforms' has made nonsense of western propaganda that fundamental change is underway in South Africa.

At the same time the slow build-up in ANC sabotage attacks on economic targets was a jolting reminder of what violent change would mean to the South African economy. A wave of desertions by young white conscripts unwilling to fight in northern Namibia and Angola brought a new note of dissent and strain into white suburbia. Gradually the previously unthinkable idea of peace with black Marxist neighbours began to appear in the South African press. With the emphasis on capitulation by economically weak black states the all-important white South African business community bought Crocker's idea.

Meanwhile Crocker's wish for a foreign policy success for the Reagan administration increased. US relations across the Third World were in deeper trouble than since the Vietnam war: the CIA's wars in Central America were going badly, US involvement in the Middle East was a disaster, in Latin America debts threatened to bring down US banks and client governments, in Africa drought compounded economic crises and pro-western governments were shaking from Kenya and Somalia to Sudan, Chad, Morocco and Liberia.

Mozambique's vulnerability

For all those on the other side of Pretoria's undeclared wars — Mozambique, Angola,



Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Swaziland and Tanzania — the need for peace was more acute than ever. Assassinations, kidnappings and economic sabotage had weakened them all. Dr Crocker's peace plan, although initially regarded with deep scepticism by the frontline states, was cautiously welcomed by some leaders, most significantly Samora Machel himself, as the only alternative to the status quo.

Mozambique with its long border with South Africa and an economy closely tied to South Africa's since the days of Portuguese colonialism had proved highly vulnerable to South Africa's destruction tactics.

**That destructive policy
 option was increasingly
 expensive in terms both of
 cash and of US
 international relations**

The Mozambique National Resistance Movement,¹ a puppet opposition to Frelimo set up by the former Rhodesian Special Branch chief, Ken Flowers, in 1976, burned crops, terrorised and mutilated peasants, ambushed transport, mined roads, railways and the oil pipeline.

MNR has no political ideology and no credible leadership. But South African officers led its bands of former Portuguese

collaborators. South Africa supplied arms, food, planes, helicopters, boats, rail links and training camps for the guerrillas. By late 1983 MNR was operating freely over about three quarters of the country. Machel visited Western Europe in a desperate attempt to get the West to put pressure on South Africa to lay off and to back Frelimo with arms supplies. When nothing concrete resulted Machel told his Eastern bloc allies that he would have to sign a peace pact with South Africa or see Frelimo collapse.

The Nkomati accord

The peace pact was the Nkomati accord which pledged non-aggression by both sides. South Africa infiltrated 1,000 MNR guerrillas into Mozambique just before signing and promised to cut off MNR's access to supplies and to their powerful propaganda radio. Mozambique promised to stop ANC guerrillas using the country as a conduit into South Africa. Publicly Machel promised that moral and diplomatic support for the ANC would remain unchanged.

However, the Mozambican army raided the homes of leading ANC members, the Frelimo government abruptly expelled most of the ANC militants from Maputo and, most significantly, began to describe Africa's most important liberation move-

¹ For an authoritative analysis of the history and practice of MNR see Paul Fauvet in current *Review of African Political Economy* no 30.

ment as 'a human rights movement'². This form of words is the US formulation used to undercut the common African material support for armed struggle inside South Africa. Within the OAU, countries like Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana and Algeria were quick to force a reaffirmation of support for the ANC's policies — including the legitimacy of armed struggle to overthrow apartheid.

The United States had carefully repaired Mozambique's confidence before pushing them towards signing Nkomati and facing the inevitable ANC criticisms of 'the setback to the liberation struggle' as ANC officials describe it. The expulsion of two CIA agents in 1981 had brought relations to freezing point. But through numerous economic relationships, confidence built up with some sections of the

The US idea of changing the all-out destruction strategy for diplomacy was slowly accepted by South Africa

government, and a US ambassador was appointed to Maputo last year. Even so Frelimo signed Nkomati only as part of an interlocking jigsaw of changing relations between South Africa and all its neighbours — especially Namibia. Hence Machel's determined characterisation of the pact as a diplomatic triumph for Africa. However, the other frontline states did not see it that way and refused his invitations to be present at the signing of Nkomati.

The Namibian carrot

Shuttle diplomacy à la Kissinger has had a bad name in Southern Africa from the days when he, as Secretary of State, overpromised and under-delivered to all parties in the war for Zimbabwe's independence. However in the latest round which led to Nkomati, Crocker and his deputy Frank Wisner did manage to build credibility in some government circles in Mozambique, Lusaka and Angola — particularly on the issue of their commitment to getting independence to Namibia under UN resolution 435. (This provides for a ceasefire followed by UN-supervised elections.) The five nation western contact group failed to persuade South Africa to implement this, the United Nations failed, but Crocker believed he held the card over South Africa which could win — construc-

tive engagement with all the carrots of US capital.

Swapo's Sam Nujoma visited Washington and was well received. Crocker himself repeatedly tried to persuade the South African government that Swapo would be a weak and pliant neighbour and no serious marxist threat. He pointed to Mozambique's non-aggression pact as a pattern which could ensure South Africa that the ANC could be choked off on all sides. The US never took the South African-backed so-called internal parties seriously as a basis for an independent Namibia though Pretoria has tried desperately to keep them in all negotiations on Namibian independence. Pretoria's slow flirtation with the idea of implementing UN resolution 435 and opening the door to a Swapo-dominated government instead of the war in Namibia continues. It is too early to say whether Pretoria will in fact move towards Namibian independence before it sees tangible results of the long destruction it has wrought in Angola.

The Angolan dimension

In Lusaka in February Angola and South Africa agreed to set up a joint monitoring force to over-see the South African army's retreat from Cunene province which they had occupied and devastated since 1981. The *quid pro quo* allegedly offered by the Angolans (though they have never said this publicly) was to prevent Swapo guerrillas infiltrating into northern Namibia through Cunene. Swapo was not a party to the Lusaka agreement. There was no ceasefire in northern Namibia's war zone. Nor were the MPLA prepared to sign a non-aggression pact with South Africa as Pretoria would have liked. As one Angolan official put it, 'how do you agree not to aggress someone you have never aggressed nor intended to?'

The triangular Angola/Namibia/South African relationship is the most complicated part of Dr Crocker's diplomatic web. The spider in it is Jonas Savimbi and Unita which is proving a severe embarrassment to Crocker.

Like MNR on the other side of the continent, Unita is led by South African officers and South African funded mercenaries. It is supplied by South Africa's arms, planes, helicopters, parachute drops of food, and radio links. The history of Unita's relations with South Africa, the United States and Zaire ten years ago detailed in John Stockwell's book *In Search of Enemies* is impossible to ignore today in any serious look at destabilisation in Angola. Savimbi's activities are casting a

heavy shadow over Dr Crocker's efforts to portray Washington as working for peace in the area.

Savimbi's own slogans put up in his 'capital' at Jamba on the South African border for every visiting diplomat or journalist to see say it all, 'Russians, Czechs, Cubans, go home. Unita, key to Angola. Angola, key to Africa. Africa, key to the West.'

The West created what Unita is today from a force which was a hopeless loser ten years ago, as Stockwell's book makes clear. After his first secret visit to Angola through Zaire during the independence war against Portugal, he advised the CIA that 'Unita had no logistical systems, the poorest of internal communications, no organisation or leadership below the level of major.' Today Unita has officers trained in Morocco by Americans, and high standard logistics and communications through both South Africa and Israeli advised camps in Zaire — another key US ally in Africa.

Angola — the most important target

Unita's propaganda campaign is organised through Lisbon which had emerged as an important US proxy in Crocker's diplomatic jigsaw of the last year. Through carefully written and skilfully timed military communiques Unita's Lisbon office has used the major western news agencies to build up a picture in the western media of Unita as a credible popular force with a substantial control area over the population of eastern and southern Angola. Spe-

Mozambique . . . had proved highly vulnerable to South Africa's destruction tactics

cial flights through Zaire or South Africa have been laid on for trusted conservative journalists who have put flesh on the military communiques with long interviews with Savimbi and splash colour stories from Jamba.

Never has this poem been so apposite:

You cannot hope to bribe or twist,
Thank God, the British journalist:
But seeing what the man will do,
Unbribed, there's no occasion to.

The American hand in the propaganda war in Southern Africa is usually covert. But sometimes it shows. The *Sunday Times* in February, for instance, had a major article on the progress of Dr Crocker's



Oliver Tambo (left), president of African National Congress and Samora Machel (right) president of Mozambique

moves in Southern Africa. 'Deal will erode Soviet power in Africa.' The thesis was backed by a document supposedly captured in Grenada six months before by the Americans. It was said to be a record of a conversation between the Angolan Foreign Minister and a Grenadian official in which Paulo Jorge supposedly described his government's 'disillusion with Swapo, which it blamed for much of the deterioration in the Angolan economy.' It is impossible to believe that the *Sunday Times* could have believed such a crude, and conveniently available, document was genuine.

The MPLA, fighting a real war including assassinations of Cuban workers and British university teachers, more or less gave up on the dirty propaganda war being won by the western press.

But the artificial weight being given to Unita by the western press and western governments may yet prove to be the most dangerous aspect of the unfolding changes in the whole southern African region.

The other frontline states ... refused his invitations to be present at the signing of Nkomati

Pretoria's real price for Namibian independence is, as it always has been, withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and a place in the MPLA government for Unita. The US goal is the same, although they do not admit it.

Angola, because of its potential econo-

mic strength from its oil and diamonds, and the moral authority its government has in the Third World, is one of the most important targets of imperialism in Africa. The long war by US proxies has sapped the MPLA's strength. US capitalism has ceaselessly wooed sections of the MPLA and tried to erode the government's unity and ideological clarity.

Since the joint South African/Angolan monitoring commission began work in February, South Africa has demonstrated consistent bad faith. The promise to withdraw by the end of March has still not been met four months later. Much more serious has been the South Africans' build-up of Unita during this period and the South African Defence Force's movement of

² Economics Minister Jacinto Veloso

heavy weapons onto the southern Angola/Namibia border.

An unclear future

Here again Washington and Pretoria differ in their tactics with Washington favouring a softer line towards Luanda — at least in public — in order to keep Crocker's jigsaw from falling apart.

In the five months since Nkomati was hailed as a triumph by the Americans there have been serious signs of its breaking down on every front. In Mozambique MNR have been more active than ever and it is increasingly difficult to believe, as the Mozambican government still does for public consumption, that South Africa is no longer involved. In May Savimbi secretly met Dr Crocker and the South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha in Cape Town. Both Savimbi and South Africa told Crocker they wanted to raise the stakes for peace. South Africa's demands to Angola for a non-aggression pact and the same kind of economic links as Maputo has agreed to follow. South Africa suggested joint development of Angola's Ruacana hydro-electric scheme. Angola has no incentive to agree to such a scheme, though as Savimbi says, if only Unita was

in the government there would be no more barriers to such 'development' of Angola's economy.

The MPLA . . . more or less gave up on the dirty propaganda war being won by the western press

The Americans have boasted that Samora Machel has become their most important ally in Africa. Nkomati was to have set a pattern for non-aggression pacts. But even Lesotho and Botswana have not agreed to sign. And US feelers to the ANC to give up the armed struggle and negotiate have been rebuffed. African governments which train ANC fighters have shown no readiness to change their policies. South Africa remains a pariah for the rest of the world.

The US has miscalculated the importance of the UDF inside South Africa. It is not, as they hope, an organisation which can be coopted and used to outflank the ANC. Scholarships to the US come thick and fast these days to trade unionists, students, churchmen and even the ANC's

exiled rival, the Pan African Congress. But the young men and women who left South Africa after Soweto and converged on the ANC for military training are not candidates for coopting into Dr Crocker's constructive engagement. Many of them have been infiltrated back into South Africa already. As the former correspondent of the *Wall Street Journal* writes in a new book which should deeply worry Dr Crocker, 'Wherever white people gather in South Africa the fear of Revolution is pervasive. Wherever black people gather there is hope for *amandla* (power) coupled with a fear of violence.'³

The liberation struggle inside South Africa has been set back in the immediate aftermath of Nkomati, but it has bought Frelimo a breathing space. It remains to be seen whether Pretoria dares to take off the pressure on the other side — on Angola and Namibia. And whether Dr Crocker will ever use any of the sticks he holds to force some changes on the apartheid regime which, as he knows, is an unstable link in imperialism's control of southern Africa.

³ June Goodwin Cry *Amandla* Holmes and Meier New York.



Wilting in the heat of Thatcherism? Sweltering in Sunny Bulgaria? . . .

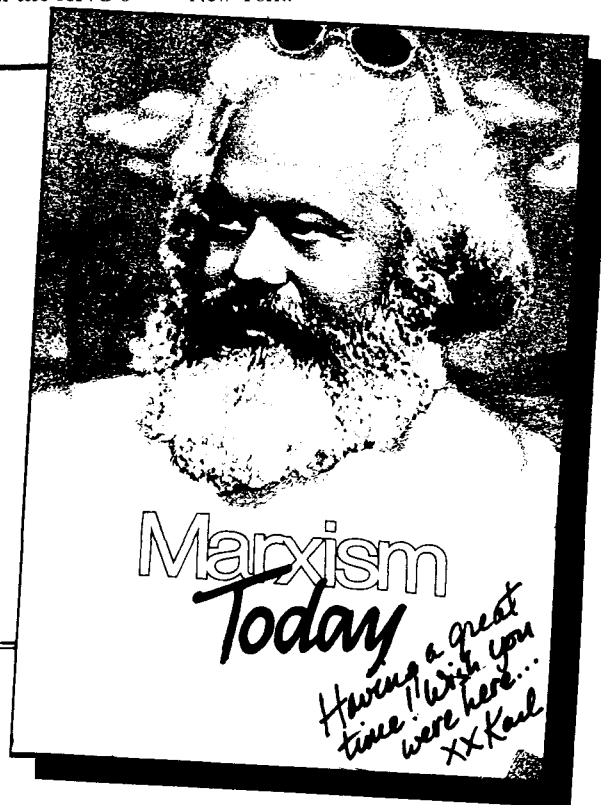
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WHAT IS THE CONNECTION between violent death in Santo Domingo and the near collapse of one of the biggest US banks? No, not a Graham Greene novel, but the world debt crisis. Austerity measures imposed in response to the debt crisis have already led to serious rioting in a number of Caribbean and Latin American countries. Bolivia has experienced a general strike. The weakness of Brazil's military government in their negotiations with the western banks and the IMF helped the democratic opposition put over a million people on to the streets of Sao Paulo earlier this year. In the US, banking giant Continental Illinois faced a 'bank run' caused by fears that its loans in Latin America would not be repaid. Today, Continental Illinois is kept in business only through an unprecedented government rescue package whose implications are straining the US financial system. Other top US banks have faced speculative selling of their shares. In May, another major US bank, Manufacturers' Hanover, had 11% wiped off its share value in one day.

Here in Britain the Midland is under pressure. At the end of April its share price was £4. On June 28 it fell from £3 to £2.77 as one million shares were dumped on the London Stock Exchange. The reason for this sudden panic was the same as that affecting the US banks, the fear that Midland's loans to Latin America would turn out to be bad debts. Alliances are being strained as right-wing governments, formerly reliable US supporters in the developing countries, are propelled into serious political conflict with the Reagan administration over the debt crisis. And it seems to be getting worse. Interest rates in the US have already risen four times this year. Each interest rate increase means that the loan repayments on the outstanding debt become bigger. And so the debtor countries believe they are in an impossible position.

The roots of the debt crisis

The world debt crisis was born ten years ago. The oil price rise of 1973/74 changed world economic conditions. The advanced, industrial capitalist countries suddenly became weaker in relation to the oil producers organised in OPEC. The resultant wealth transfer stimulated a boom in most OPEC countries – for example, the Libyan economy grew at over 10% a year. The advanced countries mostly slipped into recession and then depression. And the problems of the many non-oil developing countries became acute.

The imports of these developing coun-

**The world debt crisis has arrived.
The Third World countries,
unable to pay, are making a stand.
Several American banks are
on the verge of catastrophe.
The North-South issue has
acquired a new dimension.**

THE Great Crash of '84?

David Green

tries consist mostly of capital goods needed for economic development (machinery, tractors etc) and essential raw materials including oil. The rise in the oil price meant either that the non-oil developing countries had to cut back on their essential imports or greatly expand their export earnings to pay the new oil price. As the recession bit in the advanced industrial countries it became more difficult for the non-oil developing countries to win export orders as it is the industrial countries who are their biggest markets. And, since 1975, every year has seen more trade barriers erected against the exports of the non-oil developing countries. Only a few of these countries managed to export their way out of trouble. The rest had only one solution left open – to borrow and hope that future economic development would enable them to pay their debts.

The western commercial banks were ready to lend. They, unlike their parent economies, were flush with cash. Governments, firms and individuals in the OPEC countries deposited their export earnings with the western commercial banks in order to earn interest. The banks were looking for opportunities to lend this cash.

Loans to non-oil developing country governments, public corporations and local authorities seemed ideal. These countries needed the cash and were prepared to pay relatively high rates of interest. Lending to state and public authorities seemed secure. 'Countries don't go bust' was the phrase that summed up the banks' attitude. And, as a final apparent security, the IMF was often involved in some way with the economy of the country concerned. Western commercial bank lending to non-oil developing countries rose at the very rapid rate of 23% per year from 1975 to 1982.

The bubble bursts

This situation could not continue indefinitely. Debt repayments started to become a major drain on the economies of the non-oil developing countries. There was no great boom in the export earnings of these countries. In fact, their position worsened as in many cases the prices of their exports actually fell. The advanced industrial countries and OPEC steadfastly refused to take any major initiative to assist economic development in the non-oil developing countries. There was another major oil price rise in 1979. And the depression meant that the major export markets for the non-oil developing countries shrank. By 1982 it had become impossible for many non-oil developing countries to repay their debts as they became due.

The position was particularly bad in the 'Western Hemisphere' countries of Mexico, Central and Latin America and the Caribbean, although many African and some Asian countries were affected as well. By the early 80s it would have taken 2½ years of export earnings with no importing at all (an impossibility) to pay off these countries' debts. And the debt amounted to well over ⅓ of their total yearly production. The debt crisis had arrived.

Ratio of external debts to exports of goods and services	1973	1978	1983
All non-oil developing countries	115.4	130.2	144.4
Western Hemisphere countries	176.2	211.5	242.8

Ratio of external debts to Gross Domestic Product			
All non-oil developing countries	22.4	28.5	34.7
Western Hemisphere countries	23.0	30.3	38.6

Source: IMF

Debt crisis: round one

The first reaction of the commercial banks to the possibility that loans might not be repaid was to clamp down on new loans. Had this reaction continued it would have ensured that debts for repayment were not honoured. By 1982 the IMF was deeply involved.

The IMF's funds mostly come from the advanced industrial capitalist countries. Unlike the UN, its policy direction is controlled by them as well. The governments of the seven nations attending the recent London economic summit (France, US, UK, Japan, Canada, West Germany and Italy) control 46% of the vote. IMF policies have usually reflected the dominant view of western banking and financial opinion. And so it proved in the IMF's management of the world debt crisis.

The IMF's policy was to arrange new loans for debtor countries on tough conditions. The conditions included the repayment of debts as they fell due, major cuts in imports, raising consumer prices on essential goods such as oil, cutting public spending, halting many new development projects, further opening developing economies to western capital and renewing the drive for export earnings. No help was given on negotiating cheaper loans or tackling such major development problems as low prices for the exported products of the non-oil developing countries. But if the IMF conditions were accepted, the commercial banks would also make new loans. The IMF approach was pursued on a strictly case by case basis. Not all debtor countries accepted the IMF's conditions. But the major debtor nations did.

It seemed that the IMF and the western commercial and central banks had solved the debt crisis. The solution was short-lived.

Debt crisis: round two

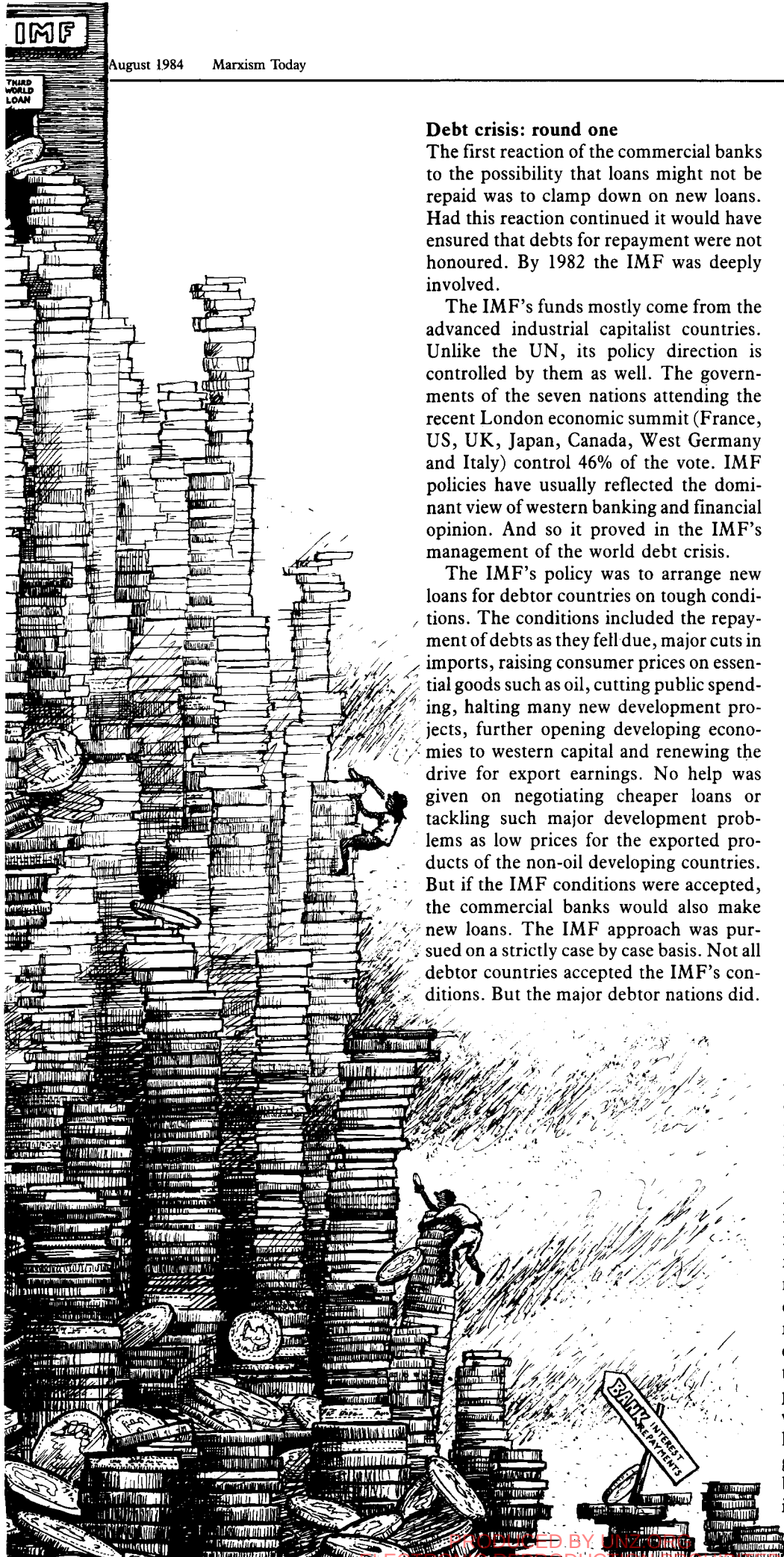
By the beginning of 1984 the major debtor countries had had enough. Following IMF austerity programmes was proving politically unpopular and economically damaging. Mexico's total annual production had dropped 4% in a year. Brazil was paying over half of its export earnings in debt

It seemed that the IMF and the . . . banks had solved the debt crisis. The solution was short-lived

repayments. And, despite real sacrifice, the debts of the non-oil developing countries had grown. This growth was not due to extravagant public spending, particularly bad economic management or any other factor within the control of the debtor governments. From the beginning of 1982 to the beginning of 1984 Latin American countries were exporting more goods and services than they were importing. In this, they were strictly meeting one of the key IMF criteria. The reason for the growth in debt was that real interest rates were high and increasing. Most of the loans had been made in US dollars with interest payments which varied as US interest rates changed. As interest rates in the US went up, so the debts grew. The IMF's solution had failed.

Can't pay, won't pay

In early 1984 it became clear that many debtor countries could not repay their debts as they fell due. Nigeria, the Philippines, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and others all appeared to be in this position. Domestic political pressures combined with the high US interest rates to force a change in the negotiating policy of debtor nations. These nations began to push for new loans to be made on significantly better terms. The debtor countries had tried the IMF's programmes. They had successfully achieved cuts in imports and increases in exports at the cost of much real suffering by already poor people. But the debt crisis had worsened because US interest rates were high. The debtor countries blamed the US government for this. The US government both determines the broad direction of US interest rates and, through its alliances and



20% block vote, controls IMF policy. The stage was set for confrontation. National interests were at stake.

For some time there had been discussions about a co-ordinated approach by debtor nations to the debt crisis. It was argued that a co-ordinated approach would yield better loan terms and strengthen the longer term position of the non-oil developing countries. At the end of March 1984 the tougher negotiating stand of the debtor countries and the concept of debtor co-operation received a boost. Argentina was due to make major repayments on March 31. It needed a new loan to make the repayments but was unwilling to accept the tough conditions offered by the IMF. Default seemed certain. Then, right at the deadline, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico lent Argentina US \$300 million on a short term basis. The US government, fearful that an Argentinian default would lead to chaos in the US financial system, matched the loan. Argentina, now in a much stronger position, resumed negotiations with the western commercial banks and the IMF. The era of debtor co-ordination seemed about to arrive.

In late June, a major summit of 11 Latin American and Caribbean debtor countries was held in Cartagena, Venezuela. This summit rejected some of the more radical demands pressed by Argentina and others but the approach eventually agreed signalled a major change. The summit called for a major and drastic reduction in interest rates, changes in the conditions attached to IMF loans, the limitation of debt service repayments to a fixed proportion of export earnings, the establishment of a special international fund to alleviate the impact of the current high interest rates and other measures to assist the debtor countries. The contrast with the approach of the advanced industrial countries was great.

The western banks

A few weeks before the Cartagena meeting the heads of the leading, industrial capitalist nations met in London. This summit agreed a very different approach to that urged by the debtor countries. The final Economic Declaration arising from the London summit essentially confirmed the old policy. The western leaders attached particular importance to 'helping debtor countries make necessary economic and financial policy changes', by which they meant adhering to the IMF loan conditions. The central role of the IMF and its austerity programmes was confirmed. And the summit declaration singled out the

importance of the debtor countries opening their economies to the firms of the advanced countries. Nothing new was said about the debts owing to the western commercial banks.

It was a complacent approach. And it drew an infuriated reaction from the debtor nations. It also left the western commercial banks in a dilemma. They have had a major influence in formulating the policies of western governments and the IMF. But they are now in a dilemma. They want their money back. They realise that the great lending boom to the non-oil developing countries is over. And so are the good profits they made from this business. But they also know that the debtor nations cannot afford to repay all their debts if current economic conditions prevail. If the commercial banks stop making new loans to the debtor countries then those countries are certain to default on their debts. And a rash of articles in the financial press has illustrated that they are unlikely to have any real legal claim to recover their money.

A further factor undermining the stability of the major western commercial banks is the major changes which have taken place in financial markets. In recent years most of these markets have been 'deregulated', that is freed from many state controls. This has allowed banks to grow rapidly into big multinational companies and intensified competition. But greater competition also means that bank failures become more likely.

What will happen now?

The debt crisis is now finely poised. Several outcomes are possible. A continuation of the current policies of the IMF and advanced industrial countries will leave the debtor countries unable to meet their loan repayments. In this situation the run on Continental Illinois will probably prove just the first. There may be significant bank crashes before the western financial system adjusts. Big upheavals have occurred before. Such an outcome would almost certainly signal the end of the current rapid US economic growth and a return to

By the beginning of 1984 the major debtor countries had had enough

depression. This would be the 'market' solution.

The western commercial banks almost certainly favour a solution to the debt crisis

which involves the advanced industrial governments absorbing some real losses by giving cheap loans to the debtor nations or through some other mechanism. This, combined with more sacrifice by the debtor nations as they applied tough IMF adjustment programmes, would enable the western commercial banks to be repaid. But the first part of this solution runs contrary to the whole line of monetarist policy developed by the banks, advanced capitalist governments and the IMF over recent years. And which US politician wants to help banks at the cost of the US Treasury in presidential election year? A political dilemma accompanies a financial dilemma. The western bankers are certainly not sober.

Initiatives along the lines suggested by the debtor countries are possible. It may just be that the US government will consider that its overall foreign policy interests are best served by making some concessions – particularly to the Latin American debtor countries. The situation in Central America is such that the US does not want

In early 1984 it became clear that many debtor countries could not repay their debts as they fell down

to arouse too much Latin American hostility. The US does attach a lot of importance to maintaining reliable allies in government in Latin America. In these circumstances, the US government may be prepared to absorb significant real losses in exchange for maintaining its financial system essentially unscathed and its Latin American alliances intact. But such a policy has difficult domestic consequences. Favouring the banks and foreigners at the expense of the US economy and government spending programmes will not be popular. And it too may prove risky in a presidential election year.

One possibility, which is being semi-illicitly discussed in the western financial world is that a period of living on the brink may be allowed to stimulate higher inflation in the advanced industrial countries. And this would have the effect of reducing the real debts of the non-oil developing countries in a relatively painless way as happened in 1974/75. But the current policy priority of most advanced industrial nations is to avoid a major inflation and will not change by government decision.

As for more 'radical' solutions, these are

unlikely. Over a year ago, French President Mitterrand suggested that a new Bretton Woods conference be convened to consider major changes in the international financial system. This initiative has died. And in the absence of support from at least some other major western governments it will not come alive. IMF and international financial policy in an expansionist direction would be highly beneficial for both the western economies and the debtor countries. This should form a core part of any progressive initiative.

The contrast with the approval of the advanced industrial countries was great

Towards a new internationalism

International financial policy, the role of the IMF and the problems of economic development in poorer countries receive relatively little attention on the British Left. This is unfortunate. The IMF was the first major economic institution to embrace monetarism in the wake of the international financial upheavals of the early 1970s. In 1976, the IMF played a major role in introducing monetarist policies into Britain. In exchange for an IMF loan the then Labour government agreed a relatively mild IMF adjustment programme which involved cuts in public spending, the austerity measures which led to

the 'winter of discontent' and an overall policy change to monetarist economic management. The consequences of this are well-known. And yet the 1983 Labour manifesto, for example, has little to say about the IMF and lumps it together with the World Bank. Confusing the IMF and the World Bank highlights the need for the Left to develop a serious and coherent policy. The World Bank is, perhaps, the last western financial institution to put Keynesian values of production and employment high on its list of policy priorities. Unlike the IMF, its policies and funding are under sharp attack from the Reagan administration.

The development of a left alternative approach to the IMF and on the international financial system is needed for two reasons. No alternative economic strategy of the Left will succeed without a corresponding strategy for Britain's international relations. The experience of the Socialist-Communist government in France shows that. And any progressive British government would need to take account of the needs and aspirations of the non-oil developing countries. Britain casts the second largest vote at the IMF – 6.82%. British banks have a deep involvement in the world debt crisis. And Britain is the home of the second largest number of multinational corporations after the US.

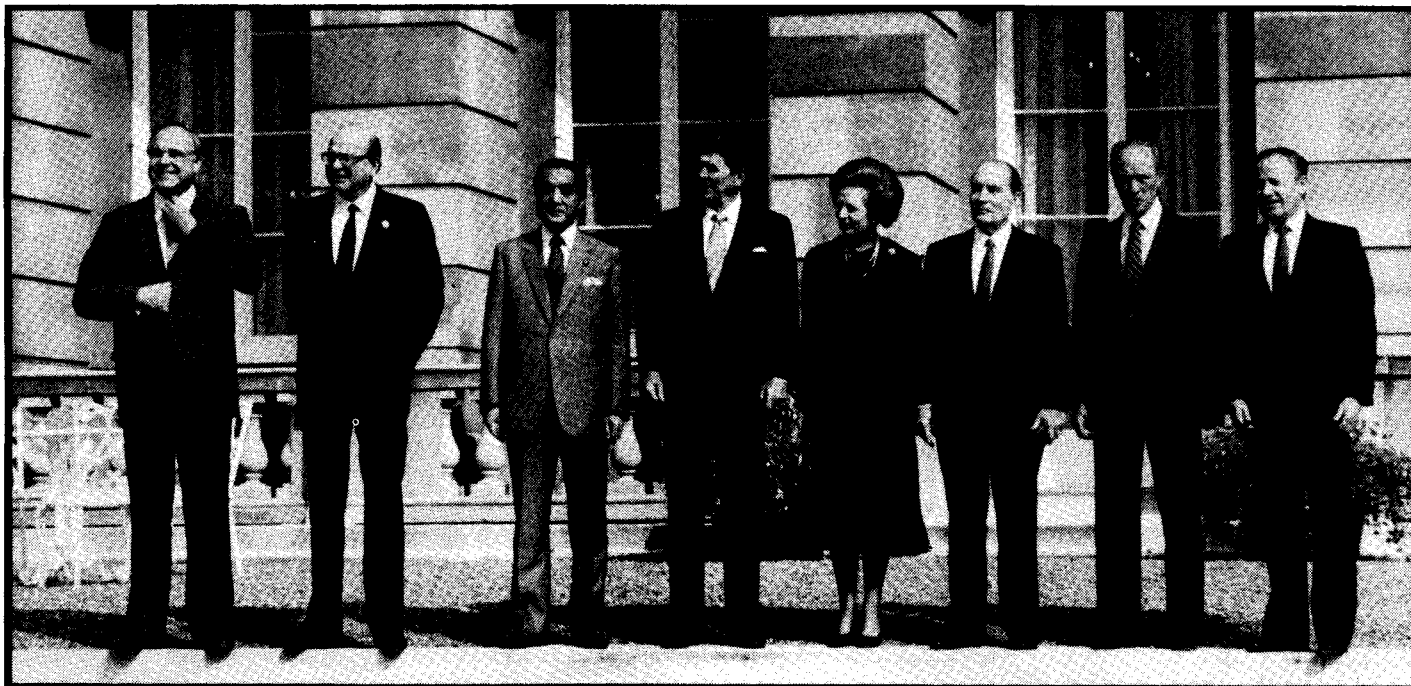
A starting point for a progressive approach is to press for a policy change at the IMF so that its funds are used to finance an expansion in world economic production and to counter trends to recession and depression.

The IMF was established to act as a force for international economic stability not an agent for global deflation. The IMF could use its funds to help countries achieve higher levels of production. And such an approach would lay the basis for a long term solution to the world debt crisis.

In the short term western commercial banks and governments would have to accept some real losses. But a higher level of economic activity in both the advanced industrial countries and the non-oil developing countries would ease the burden of debt repayments. It would also open the way to tackling other important questions of economic development and North-South relations such as the prices paid for commodities and the planned development of mass production industries in non-oil developing countries. During the 1982-84 phase of the world debt crisis real resources were transferred from the poor countries of the South to the western commercial banks. For decades, economic relations between North and South have resulted in such transfers, but only rarely have they been so apparent. An IMF policy of international expansion would be an important step towards a new, fairer, international economic order. The debt crisis can be tackled constructively, but not if the policy of the advanced capitalist nations and the IMF remains imprisoned in their current monetarist mould. □

My thanks to Bob Rowthorn and John Wells for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

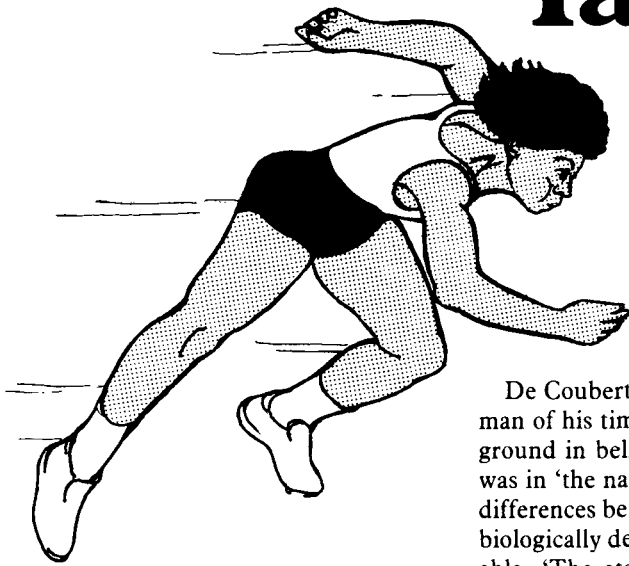
London Economic Summit, 1984



There is a long history of the Olympics as a male preserve. Things have changed: but not as much as you might think.

Taking men on at their Games

Jennifer Hargreaves



*'I personally am against the participation of women in public competitions . . . At the Olympic Games their primary role should be like in the ancient tournaments — the crowning of the (male) victors with laurels.'*¹

These are the words of Pierre de Coubertin who founded the modern Olympics in 1896 and was the most powerful member of the central decision making authority of the Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for over 30 years. De Coubertin was well known for his misogyny and, until his death in 1937, he was intransigent in his opposition to women's sport. It was, he stated, against the 'laws of nature'² and 'the most unaesthetic sight human eyes could contemplate'.³ 'The Olympic Games', he declared, 'must be reserved for men' for the 'solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism' with 'female applause as reward'.⁴

De Coubertin's Olympic model was a model of male sport which explicitly excluded women and which was an unambiguous celebration of male supremacy and physical prowess. In the first place, his passion and energy to institute a modern Olympics derived from his desire to reinvigorate the young men of France after his country's defeat in 1870 in the Franco-Prussian war. His plan was rooted in the idealisation of ancient Greek Olympism together with his admiration of the cult of athleticism in English public schools. In both these contexts, the symbolic focus of male power was the male athlete.

De Coubertin was not exceptional for a man of his time with an aristocratic background in believing that male superiority was in 'the natural order of things' — that differences between men and women were biologically determined and hence immutable. 'The eternal role of women in this world', he said, 'is to be a companion of the male and the mother of the family'⁵ and, by the same argument, he believed that women were unsuited, because of their innate physical and emotional characteristics, for the Olympic sphere.

Olympic sport was therefore, from the start, a contested zone, between men and women who, like de Coubertin, espoused dominant reactionary ideas about gender divisions, and those men and women who held more liberal views and struggled to advance women's participation in sport.

Elitist traditions

Class, as well as sex, was a fundamental dimension of the development of modern Olympism. De Coubertin had connections with members of the European nobility who were interested in sport and the IOC had strong aristocratic associations from the time of its inauguration. It was composed of a body of upper-class Anglo-Saxon men, and almost every athlete who competed in the first Olympics was rich and leisured. Members of the British team were predominantly public school Oxbridge athletes, and the American team was composed of wealthy young men from Harvard and Princeton. De Coubertin identified Olympism as 'an elite', but he went on to say, 'whose origin is completely egalitarian, since it is determined only by the bodily superiority of the individual and his muscular possibilities'. Such expressions of 'egalitarianism' have provided a basic tenet of Olympism which is very

misleading. The term 'elite' is used to signify 'the best', but more realistically elitism in the Olympics carries implications of exclusiveness, exploitation and the exercise of power and privilege. From the start, the modern Olympics were an example of institutionalised sexism and class domination — a conservatising force which made an indelible mark on Olympic development in the twentieth century and undoubtedly hindered the growth of women's participation. However, the original model of Olympic sport was not inviolable — it encapsulated demands for change as well as resistance to them.

The nineteenth-century . . .
image of women as
physically limited by
comparison with men has
been hard to shift.

The first Olympics, in Greece in 1896, exemplified sport as a bastion of bourgeois male privilege, and the single unofficial female competitor who 'crashed' the marathon — a Greek woman called Melpomene — symbolised the efforts of women to overcome male dominance. In 1908 women were allowed for the first time to take part officially in Olympic competition and 36 women competed in lawn tennis, archery, figure skating and yachting, making up 1.75% of the total number of participants. There were, by comparison, 2,023 men comprising 98.25% of all those taking part. In 1912 archery was withdrawn and two swimming events and one diving event were added to the women's Olympic programme. There has been a gradual expansion of Olympic sport

for women since that time, but every advance has been the result of struggle and protest. It was not until 1928, immediately after de Coubertin had resigned as president of the IOC, and 32 years after the first modern Olympic Games, that women's track and field athletics — the major Olympic sports — had their Olympic debut.

The stage has now been reached where there are Olympic events for women in a wide range of sports and the marathon is an official event in the women's programme of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, for the first time. It would seem, therefore, that the struggle for Olympic equivalence with men is over, but a closer look would reveal that this is far from true. Females are barred from all events in eight out of the 27 Olympic sports — the biathlon, bobsleigh, boxing, ice hockey, judo, soccer, weightlifting and wrestling. In addition, there are no athletic events for women in the 5,000 metre and 10,000 metre runs, or in the pole vault, triple jump and hammer events. Women also have fewer events to choose from in rowing, basketball, canoeing, fencing, and handball and are barred from water polo. There are 168 all-male Olympic events, 73 all-female events and 15 mixed events. In all, women comprise only 20% of all competitors in the summer and winter Olympics.

Continuing restrictions

Those people who have been involved in promoting the emancipation of women's sport throughout the world have, by and large, been excluded from positions of power in the Olympic movement where there has been paranoid hostility to an increase in female participation. The sex and class composition of the administrative and decision-making bodies of Olympic sport has not fundamentally changed since de Coubertin's days. The IOC remained an elite and exclusively male body for almost nine decades and even now its membership is composed of 86 men and only three women. The influences of the aristocrat and the 'amateur gentleman' have always been dominant in the National Olympic Committees as well, and in the International Federations of Sport which have the monopoly of power to propose the introduction of new Olympic events. Even the Federation of International Gymnastics, representing the major Olympic sport for women today, is an almost exclusively male body.

The opposition to women's sport from these bodies has never been total — for example, from the time of his inauguration

as President of the IOC in 1972, Lord Killanin campaigned, against vigorous opposition, to get a woman elected to the IOC — it took nine years. The IOC and its affiliated associations remain predominantly elitist and undemocratic — a 'world of men' infiltrated by a tiny number of women. The idea that liberal fair-minded men can be persuaded to give women 'what they want' may be the case, but it is a position that reproduces the power relations between the sexes and reinforces the image of man as 'superior and benevolent'; in contrast to the fragile image of the 'child woman'. Women need direct power in the Olympics, sharing equally with men the decision-making procedures. Since 1952 with the entry of the Soviet Union into the Olympics, other vested interests, in particular nationalism, have affected IOC decisions and made the balance of power more complex. Even so, men from Eastern bloc countries where the expansion of women's sport is part of the explicit national sporting ideology are making decisions on behalf of women. It has, ironically, been the men from Eastern bloc countries who have specifically opposed women's entry into long-distance running events, including the marathon.

The most consistent justification for opposition to women's increased participation has been articulated in terms of female biology. The nineteenth-century stereo-

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sports.**

typed image of women as physically limited by comparison with men has been hard to shift. When it became clear in the 1930s that organised sport for women in Europe and North America had developed a momentum that seemed unstoppable, the focus of opposition changed from the attempt to eliminate Olympic sport for women altogether to an endeavour to limit participation to 'female-appropriate' sports and events. After the Berlin Olympics, Avery Brundage made one of his typically reactionary and explicitly sexist comments when he said, 'I am fed up to the ears with women as track and field competitors . . . her charms sink to less than zero. As swimmers and divers, girls are beautiful and adroit, as they are ineffective and unpleasing on the track'.⁶ As Presi-

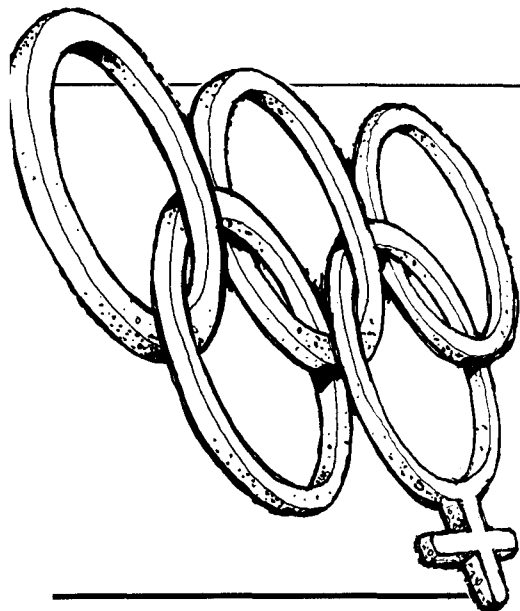
dent of the IOC in 1949, he again articulated the establishment position, 'I think women's events should be confined to those appropriate to women; swimming, tennis, figure skating and fencing, but certainly not shot-putting'.⁷ In 1966 the IOC attempted, unsuccessfully, to eliminate the women's shot-put and discus events because 'often the feminine self-image is badly mutilated when women perform in these two events'.

Sex-role stereotyping of this sort may seem out-of-date in view of the increased numbers of women in more and more sports and the outstanding successes of many women in top-class competitions. It has, nonetheless, remained an integral feature of Olympic sport and has provided the greatest limitation to women's advancement, in particular, in the traditional male sports and events that deplete masculinity. In 1978, the IOC rejected a proposal to include a 3,000 metre event for women in the Moscow Olympics because they said it was, 'a little strenuous for women' and would adversely affect their metabolism. This was an unequivocally reactionary position in view of the exceptional achievements of women in long distance running events outside the Olympic sphere and a reversal of the decision was gained for this year. The 3,000 metre run is on the programme for the first time, together with the marathon, but the struggle to get the 5,000m and the 10,000m runs on the programme continues.

Women are barred from the triple jump, pole vault and boxing because it remains a popular conception that women's reproductive systems are vulnerable to injury in these sports. It is, however, not generally understood that there are no medical or physiological reasons intrinsic to women which should prevent them, any more than men, from participation. The female reproductive organs are firmly positioned and thoroughly protected inside the body cavity and are probably less susceptible to injury than those of men. And, of course, women, like men, can wear protective apparatus to cover vulnerable parts — they have the same, not a greater, potential than men for injury. The ethics of arguments to ban dangerous sports such as boxing are as appropriate to men as they are to women.

Women's bodies

It is also a popular idea that the uniquely female processes of menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth will adversely affect women's sporting achievements and that, conversely, women's strenuous sports will



There is growing evidence that women may be better suited than men to endurance events.

impair those functions. It is not common knowledge that Olympic medals have been won and Olympic records shattered by female athletes at all phases of the menstrual cycle, and that during early pregnancy, and shortly after childbirth, women have competed successfully in Olympic sport. Fanny Blankers-Koehn, nicknamed 'the flying Dutch housewife', provides one of the best-known examples that supreme athletic ability is not incompatible with normal procreative functioning. In 1948, she won four Olympic medals when she was pregnant and then as a mother went on to set four world records. Some women suffer a reduction in the number of periods during severe training, and research undertaken in Denmark this year shows that 50% of women in training suffered a loss of menstruation.⁸ Research has also shown that normal menstruation resumes when intense exercise ceases and with no detrimental effects on fertility. Ingrid Kristiansen, one of the favourites for this year's Olympic marathon, took part in the world cross-country championships last year unaware that she was pregnant at the time. Later, this year, when her son was eight months old, she was the first woman to complete the London marathon in a time close to the world record. Regular exercise has a beneficial effect on female metabolism and the available evidence shows that the experience of premenstrual tension, painful periods and lethargy during menstruation are less common among women who undertake regular exercise. The added bonus is that labour and delivery are generally less complicated for trained athletes.

By their increased rates of participation and improved performances in high level competition, women are themselves changing misleading ideas and dispelling myths about female biology and sporting potential. Although women are on average slower and less powerful than men, it does not follow that biological differences between the sexes should impose restrictions on women's participation, or that events demanding speed and power are only suited to men. Recent research with trained athletes indicates that the superior strength of men is most marked in the arm and shoulder regions but is minimal in the legs. When undergoing similar training programmes women are developing leg strength comparable to their male counterparts and it is estimated that the thigh muscles are stronger in women than men, relative to body size.⁹

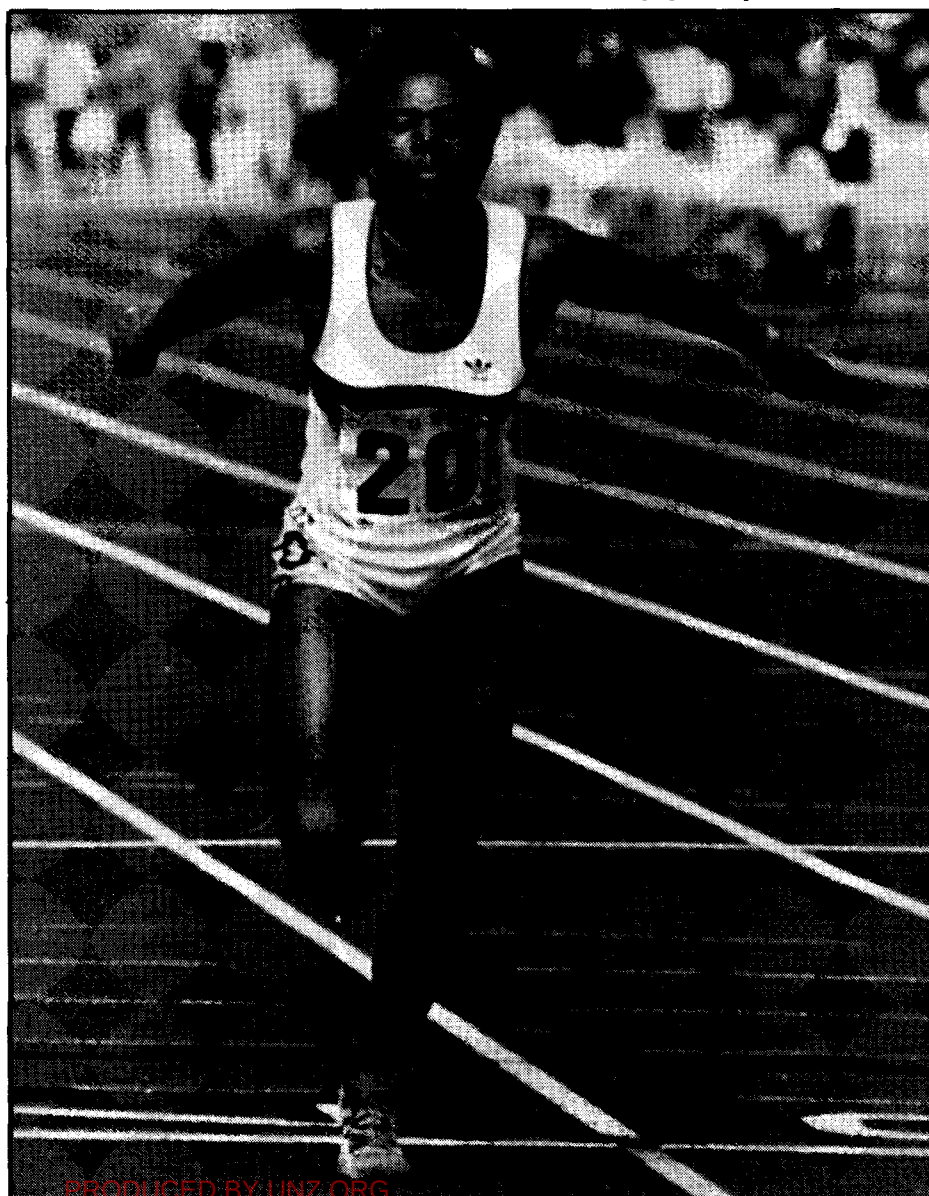
There is growing evidence that women may be better suited than men to endur-

ance events because they can avoid fatigue over long periods more efficiently. In long distance running, walking, cycling, sailing, swimming, ice-skating, roller-skating, canoeing and skiing, the trend

They face insinuations about their sexuality, or are treated as sexual objects for male voyeurism.

towards equivalence with, and superiority over, men is most dramatic. There is conjecture that by the year 2000, women will be pre-eminent in many long distance and endurance events.¹⁰ Ironically, the history of women in those sports for which they appear to be best suited has been brief because they have often been the ones where women have encountered the fier-

British Olympic champion Sonia Lannaman



cest opposition. Women have been involved in the longer distance road running and track events for little more than a decade and in relatively small numbers in North America and Western Europe. Many of these events are still unofficial competitions and not on the Olympic programme. Above all, the inclusion of the marathon in this year's Olympics is a great symbolic victory for women and the result of a long and bitter battle against mythical past accounts of female inferiority.

Sexual identity

It is paradoxical that at the same time that women who are successful in Olympic sport are challenging traditional sporting identities, they still have to accommodate to the idea that sports may defeminize them and they face insinuations about their sexuality, or are treated as sexual objects for male voyeurism. The Czechoslovak runner, Jarmila Kratochvilova, has been castigated in the western press for her supposed masculinity, whereas descriptions of Mary Decker as the stereotypical 'all female' athlete signify male desire:

(Mary) Decker is the all-American female retort to the heavy artillery of Eastern Europe which, before she came along, blasted all before it in the women's field. She has become sporting America's favourite daughter; not just a little Mary Decker, hammer of the sickles, but also as pretty, sexy Mary Decker who, in this Amazonian world, wears make-up on the track and shaves her legs . . . In the 3,000 and then the 1500 metres, Decker simply whipped those hard-faced East Europeans with the ambiguous biceps.¹¹

The tabloid series *Olympic Golden Girls* depicts the sexual attractiveness of our potential medal winners as they pose erotically, colluding in the 'femininity game'. 'Shirley Strong', we read, 'will jump for joy if she lands an Olympic gold medal',¹² and 'Sonia Legs it for Glory' as she 'shows off those lovely talents that could make her a Golden Girl — the fastest female legs in the land'.¹³

Whereas the sexuality of the nineteenth-century sportswomen tended to be de-emphasised or repressed, it would appear that the sexuality of today's successful Olympic sportswomen is systematically promoted in the public eye. The ideal type Olympians have been transformed into glamour girls — svelte and sexy — whereas the athletes who fail to conform to the desirable body shape are labelled as 'pseudo-men' — unfeminine, gay or butch. What has remained constant is that the sporting prowess of women competitors is

treated, by implication, in a less serious fashion than their sexuality — a position exemplified by sex investigations of female athletes.

The inclusion for the first time this year of two new exclusively female Olympic sports — rhythmic gymnastics and synchronised swimming — has been greeted as a victory, but we should consider whether they will do anything to break down the traditional, gender-based assumptions about sport.

In Britain a lower percentage of women participate in sport than in any other country of similar economic status except Italy.

Differences between nations

So far, generalisations have been made implying that women's Olympic sport has a homogeneous character. In one sense, this is true — Olympic sport has an international character which transcends national differences and political interests. Athletes from the East and the West are bound up in its nationalist imperatives, its competitive ethos and its history of male dominance as if it had a 'life of its own'. However, factors affecting women's participation have not been uniform for women from different nations or even for women from one nation.

The advancement of female Olympic competition is a manifestation of economic expansion and is most pronounced in societies with centrally planned economies and where women are active members of the labour force. The increased participation of women in advanced industrialised countries in the East and the West has been notable. In the socialist countries as much official encouragement is given to sport for women as is given to sport for men and more attention is focused upon elite female sport than in the West. The Soviet and GDR teams are composed of a higher proportion of female competitors than western teams and East German women win a higher percentage of medals than East German men. However, non-Olympic sports tend to be poorly developed in the socialist countries and special attention is given to those sports and events where medals can be won. Soviet women have been running marathons only since its inclusion in the Los Angeles Olympics was announced whereas western women have been struggling for recogni-

tion for long distance events for the past two decades.

In the West, there is still considerable ideological pressure against sportswomen and other factors such as class and race are significant. In Britain, a lower percentage of women participate in sport than in any other country of similar economic status, except Italy, and of those, there is a low percentage of working class participation and some sports are still, unambiguously, class specific. In no way is women's sport democratised as it is in the Eastern bloc and the Olympic team is weighted in favour of middle class women and almost exclusively in, for example, equestrian events.

It is difficult to generalise about the factors inhibiting women's sporting participation on a global scale. They are culturally specific and related to the economic and political systems of different nation-states. Religion tends to be a conservatism influence but the attitudes to sport of, for example, the Protestant, Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Moslem churches vary. The participation of women from developing and Third World countries and repressive regimes is minimal. The commonsense idea that the Olympics are a symbol of women's emancipation in sport throughout the world, and by extension women's wider participation in contemporary societies should, therefore, be resisted.

Drugs and the Olympics

There is another issue, however, which must also be faced — namely, the character of Olympic competition. For those women who are competing in top-level sport, the Olympics have become an increasingly political phenomenon and one which incorporates excesses and corruption.

The 1936 Berlin Games set a precedent in the history of modern Olympism by their blatant use as a forum for Nazi propaganda. Though less extreme, the none the less obvious politicisation of the Olympics since the war has influenced the expansion of Olympic sport for women. Olympic competition intensifies patriotism, and the success of the athletes reflects the apparent success of the social and political arrangements of their nation states. The link between female participation and sporting nationalism has occurred with the appearance of an additional 70% female athletes since the war and has been a pronounced feature of the Olympics since the re-entry of the Soviets into Olympic competition in 1952 which spear-

headed the fierce competition between Eastern and Western bloc countries and the promotion of Olympic sportswomen as medal collectors. In 1968 when the GDR entered the Games, the pre-eminence of women from socialist countries strengthened further the political dynamic of female sport. Within ten years, East German women dominated the rest of the world in athletics, swimming, gymnastics and rowing, and held 86% of world records in the 14 standard track and field events.

The emphasis on success, the exaltation of records and the cult of champions are features common to female sport in East and West. Because the peak age of performance for many female sports is during adolescence, the early specialisation, intense training, fierce competition and inevitable high wastage occurs at a very young age. The moral implications of manipulating children in such a way are serious. 'Battered child athletes' is the term employed in the US to describe those children who are psychologically damaged and physically injured by pressure that parents, teachers and coaches are putting

These horror drugs expose the hypocrisy and infectious madness inherent in Olympic sport.

on them to become sports superstars. Adults are pushing girls at a younger and younger age into gymnastics, swimming, tennis, ice-skating and even marathon running. 'Over use injuries' in all these sports are increasingly commonplace and there is no proper preventive screening scheme available.¹⁴

In gymnastics, for example, girls from a very young age are regularly subjected to stress and danger in order to increase the level of technical skill and spectacle: the

cost of Olympic sport to a regular percentage of armies of 'child-woman' gymnasts is permanent musculo-skeletal damage, paralysis and even death. Inevitably female Olympic competitors of all ages are impelled to take drugs in order to meet the demands of top-level competition. The 'break' hormone is administered to young female gymnasts in order to delay puberty so that they can remain slight, and under-developed on the hips and breasts: it is not known if there are any harmful long term effects from the use of this drug. The *Underground Steroid Handbook for Men and Women* is available in California for prospective Olympic medallists at Los Angeles and describes the side-effects such as growth of the beard and lowering of the voice in women.¹⁵ Pure testosterone is used also in order to artificially boost strength; it develops bulky muscles, stimulates hair growth, suppresses menstruation and it can lead to irreversible sterility. The latest drug in evidence for the 1984 Olympics is the Growth Hormone: when administered it is possible to gain pounds of muscle, but the side effects are irreversible — it may elongate your chin, feet or hands, produce diabetes in teenagers and heart attacks in adults.¹⁶

These horror drugs expose the hypocrisy and infectious madness inherent in Olympic sport. The Los Angeles Games will not only be 'an expression of American hype and razamatazz' but a 'Mickey Mouse' Olympics¹⁷ boycotted by 12 nations including the Soviet Union and GDR. Strangely, the absence of the East-West confrontation seems in no way to have detracted from the appeal to individuals of Olympic competition. Zola Budd was prepared to leave her homeland to be an Olympic athlete. She has secured a place in the British Olympic team — a political decision reflecting an ideology of competitive individualism. One might ponder upon the connection between the

Zola Budd affair and the aspirations of black sportswomen in apartheid South Africa, and the position of British Olympic hopefuls.

Top-level sportswomen are, in the same way as men, sucked into a competitive system in which they are increasingly expected to perform like machines and the Olympic imperative, 'Citius, Altius, Fortius', must, in its present form, reduce their capacity for physical pleasure. However, it would be exaggerated to claim that all female competitors are on a harsh drug regime or have retreated into unthinking expressions of nationalism and non-communication. At the same time as there is growing hypocrisy from those seduced by ideas of Olympic power, glory and profit, there are others including increasing numbers of women from East and West, who are working to eliminate the worst excesses and corruptions of Olympic sport. □

¹ Pierre de Coubertin 'Forty years of Olympism: 1894-1934', quoted in *Women At The Olympic Games* Wingate Monograph Series No 7, the Wingate Institute for Physical Education and Sport Netanya (Israel) 1979 p 13.

² Quoted in *ibid* p 12.

³ *Ibid*.

⁴ Pierre de Coubertin, quoted in Ellen Gerber et al, *The American Woman in Sport* Addison Wesley NY 1974 pp 137-138.

⁵ Quoted in 'Women At The Olympic Games' *op cit*.

⁶ Avery Brundage quoted in *ibid* p 38.

⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸ *Guardian*, 4/7/84 p 8.

⁹ K F Dyer *Catching Up The Men* Junction Books London 1982.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Peter Freedman 'The Fastest Painted Lady in the World' *Sunday Times* 27/5/84.

¹² *News of the World* 22/4/84.

¹³ *News of the World* 29/4/84.

¹⁴ Tony Wilkinson 'Marathon Mentality — the risks sportsmen run' *The Listener* 31/5/84 p 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid* p 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ *Observer* 8/7/84.



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For five years Clive Thornton was head of Britain's second largest building society, the Abbey National. They were five transforming years. To the annoyance of many other building society chiefs Thornton overturned many of the traditional policies of building societies, which are a direct inheritance of the Victorian middle class values that have had such a profound influence on British private sector housing finance. Thornton stopped the building society policy of 'red-lining' and put large amounts of money into the inner cities; the Abbey started building houses for rent; he lent money to housing associations for the disabled and he broke up the building societies interest rate cartel.

On 1 January 1984, to widespread amazement, Thornton was made chairman of Mirror Group Newspapers, with the specific job of floating off the company as an independent concern from Reed International. But in the early hours of the morning of 13

July Reed changed their mind and sold the Mirror Group to Robert Maxwell.

Marxism Today interviewed Clive Thornton on the morning of 12 July. At that stage, formally, the flotation was still to go ahead but after days of intense pressure from Maxwell on the Reed board, a part of Thornton clearly suspected the eventual outcome: during the interview he occasionally slipped into the past tense in describing his job at the Mirror, and his hostility towards the Reed board was not — as this interview shows — always well disguised.

As we were talking to Clive Thornton news that Reed and Maxwell's advisers were negotiating came across the tapes. Thornton immediately rang the Reed board to see if this was true, to be told it was not. Later that day they sold to Maxwell. It is now clear that Reed could have avoided this and still satisfied its own shareholders. On the Tuesday before Max-

Why did you take the job as chairman of the Mirror in the first place?

As recently as yesterday lunchtime someone said to me I can't understand why you ever left the Abbey National Building Society, you seemed to enjoy a very satisfactory lifestyle, seemed to be well received in all the right circles, to be very well paid, live well, and could even find time for leisure pursuits and see an enormous organisation going on from success to success. And, as far as he could see, I had no worries. I replied there are far too many people who see that as the ultimate goal. I took the Abbey job on because I thought the building society world had gone along without much real evidence of a social conscience being brought to bear, unlike in prewar days, when building societies were closely identified with the need for housing, as opposed to simply providing mortgage lending. What appeals to me about this job is the fact that for one reason or another, it would seem to have a very difficult industrial relations side to it. And the attraction of the job was whether I could make any improvement on that. I think an improvement on that would bring about the substance of independence because at the end of the day the best method of protection in the system we work within is that you are very successful and by reason of that expensive to take over.

That makes it sound as though if someone had come along and said, look would you like to run the Daily Express — which has similar industrial problems — you would have said yes that's an interesting challenge too. So what was the particular feel about this group of newspapers rather than any others?

Difficult to define. I don't think anyone would have been likely to offer me, it has to be said, *The Times*, the *Express*, less so now that they know me! I think my background had a lot to do with my being offered the job. And I think a lot of the way I see things is conditioned by my background: the way you identify with any particular attitude, the way you automatically respond, the way you feel about things; those things are more suited to me and my style and what I want to do than in any other newspaper that I can think of. I believe in the freedom and editorial independence of this newspaper group, which it has enjoyed for many years. A long time ago the management or board here secured the right to remove the chairman and that was important. It has not been dominated by someone who they couldn't deal with if he behaved against the interests of the newspaper. As I understand it, when the Mirror was enveloped into Reed International, it was said that that was a means of protecting the newspapers so that they would not lose their editorial independence and dictate a different style. That has continued to be the case right up until the time when I was asked to do the job, the statement made by Reed International was consistent with that earlier position. And the one issued last week again reiterated that. So that is something worth fighting for.

It matters all the more when it happens to be the one particular popular shape of these views in tabloid form. It wouldn't matter so much if you were running a newspaper in a cluster of similar newspapers expressing the same political view: the dropping of one such voice might not be as disastrous as would be the case here.



uld have been very different. The aim was to give the Mirror Group a new kind of independence. Then along came Robert Maxwell.

MIRROR IMAGE FADES

Interview with Clive Thornton
by Christopher Hird

well's final successful bid, Thornton proposed to the Reed board that they demerge the Mirror Group Newspapers, instead of floating it off; this would have made it an independent company but owned directly by Reed's shareholders. This would not have prejudiced Thornton's plans to widen the ownership of the Group to include readers and workers. But Reed rejected his suggestion.

Reading over this interview after the Maxwell takeover, Thornton remarked: 'I had got to the point where I couldn't trust the Reed board. In the light of what has happened the interview makes very interesting reading. I tried to avoid saying I was betrayed. I think I have found a great deal more frankness, honesty and integrity around Fleet Street's trade union leaders than I have in the Reed board.'

Thornton, aged 54, comes from a working class Tyneside family. He left school at 14 and after 20 years as a solicitor's

clerk and evening study qualified as a solicitor. It is clear that his working class background has had a significant influence on his view of business. His crackdowns on management expenses, his preference for eating in the Mirror canteen and his refusal of a new company car reflected the man's personal preferences but were also symbolic acts in an attempt to change the business culture of the Mirror Group. (One of the many interruptions to our interview was a visit from one of the most militant Daily Mirror chapels offering Thornton a one-year no-disruption agreement to help him achieve his targets for the company.) This interview provides a fascinating account of what it was he was trying to achieve. It is also a prospectus for what the Mirror could have become—an expanding, independent, left and left of centre, non-proprietary newspaper group, with a different and distinct business culture from that represented by Maxwell.

How would you describe your own politics?

I've never found it easy to identify with any political party and less so when I come close to the politicians. I find it difficult to say I'm one thing or another. I seem to be a mixture of things. I think when you begin to move at the top in business you find a lot of politicians have one thing in common and this surprises you, an ability to trim their sails to suit convenient winds. In the present situation we have an indication that the politicians of the Left are very concerned about the independence and the integrity of this newspaper, this newspaper group and what it stands for. Where are they? Who has so far said in any real determined way that it's bad for the paper to fall into the hands of a single individual? There's been a deafening silence over the last week or two. So I would not put too much trust in politicians of any particular colour giving me a crutch. I have a clear idea of what this newspaper stands for politically and I stand for that being maintained.

Without necessarily using party allegiances, how would you describe your own political position?

I think this country is best suited to a mixed economy. I think some of the things I'm faced with at the moment, to do with the capitalist system, are difficult to justify at all times. I mean here we are under siege from an individual and that does not necessarily have anything to do with whether you are managing the thing successfully. You could find yourself managing things

brilliantly in the national interest and still find that no-one is going to stop that falling into hands that may turn it aside from its objective. So that is something which presents a problem. But on the other hand I don't think I'd want it any other way.

What were the undertakings that Reed gave you when you took the job?

When I was approached to do the job I was told that they felt that the best interests of this group would be served by it not being sold to a single bidder. That it wasn't desirable for a single bidder to gain control of this group. Now that was the case whoever the individual happened to be. And the best means of dealing with the situation would be to float the company off in such a way as brought about the widest spread of ownership and such protection that that would give. That was the position that was stated to me to be the view of the Reed International board and in subsequent discussions with the trade unions, both in Scotland and in London, that position was restated. That would secure the protection and freedom from outside interference or influence of any individual. For very many years this group has had editorial independence and freedom from interference, and the editors value that. I think that is why I feel so strongly about that. I think of that as a position from which there could be no shifting and however much an institution may say that all you must think about are monetary considerations, I don't share that view.

But we live in a world in which it is the expectation of those who own shares in companies like Reed that they do the best for their



shareholders. How can they turn down an offer of £100 million when they have a flotation that might give them only £70 million?

But is that really the deal or is that what people think the deal is? I remember at the Abbey National Building Society when the Grays Building Society collapsed, there was no obligation on the board of that society or its shareholders to part with any of the funds of the Abbey National Building Society to make good that loss. But the board felt that the interests of the Grays' shareholders had to be looked after: it transcended monetary values.

But isn't there a world of difference between the view that a mutual organisation will take, with a history of being in the business of helping people to house themselves, and that taken by a limited liability company which has outside shareholders who are in it to make money?

Maybe. But should you then take a more generous view when you are holding the small savers' money? Can you afford to be rather more generous with the funds of small savers than you can with institutions? Here was a board of directors prepared to say to its shareholders we have no legal liability here whatever. Yet we faced up to putting that proposition to the investors, that they should not let other people suffer because of the principle at stake. Now what we've got at the Mirror Group is a situation where it is said to be very important that the independence of this company is preserved. It is said to be undesirable that it should fall into the hands of a single bidder. It is said to have been the case for years that that has been something that has been protected. And the whole basis on which this flotation is to take place is based on that foundation. I do not believe that a monetary consideration should change that. And it is said that at the end of the day you have to listen to the institutional shareholders. I wonder whether it isn't time somebody told the institutional shareholders that they have a responsibility to go beyond making money, because they're holding such a large portion of the country's wealth. Now that would probably be regarded as naive. I just think that if you've got vast resources being channelled into institutions, then I'm afraid that money-making without regard to the consequences of it, isn't the way to proceed in this day and age.

But lots of people have said that sort of thing about institutions before. One of the major obstacles to change is the perception of the people who run these institutions, being resistant to all that sort of argument.

Yes they are. A pension fund manager would say and I've heard them say it, 'we have a trust deed that requires us to employ these funds in certain ways and we must safeguard the interests of our members'. Do you never find a pension fund manager therefore taking a risk? One would imagine from that they would never do anything which might lose money.



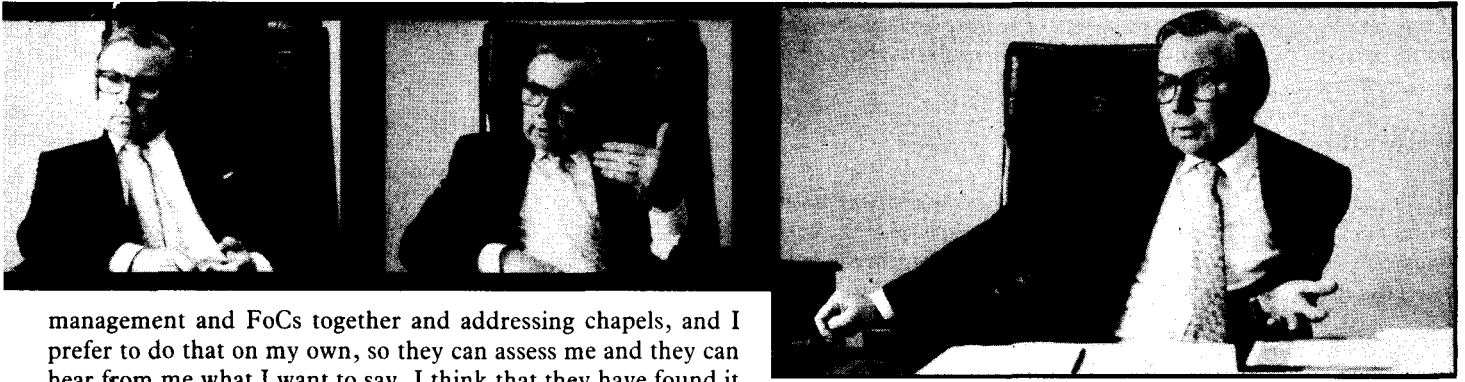
When you first came to the Mirror, there were a lot of reports about the ideas that you had for special forms of shares for readers, what you referred to yourself as a cocktail of ideas to ensure that there was not one owner.

In proceeding with the flotation, we were trying to widen the appeal of it, the popular appeal, and this was to be done in a way that involved our readers and workers. And what in the past week or two has been put together embraces as many of those things as we felt able to test on the market given that market conditions at the moment are not the most favourable to risk something that may be doubtful. But I think it would look very different from anything so far on the market. So I'm reasonably pleased with what came out. The disturbing thing is that I have insisted for months that we would be subject to predatory attack. So we needed rather more than a wide spread of shareholding, and it became known that the mechanism to secure the protection was being brought into place. And I think that accounts for the bid being made before the flotation. Anyone was going to be allowed to hold shares but not absolute control; clearly that was not enough to a bidder. That throws us right back on to whether that is a good thing or a bad thing. Now lots of people don't seem to mind. Lots of people who I would have thought should have minded at the moment don't seem to. The sort of people who seemed to be raising voices at the time Reed decided to dispose of the company in the first place are curiously silent. I haven't been aware of much in political circles, for example. Now I also happen to think the bid that's been put in would give the bidder this company on the cheap. If you could bring about change with the co-operation and on the basis of a partnership with the work force, which again many people think is naive, you would then begin to see how cheaply these assets are valued.

I think at one stage you referred to a 'social contract' with the unions here. I wonder whether you could tell me something about that. How do you see the relationship between yourself and the unions?

There's a common view in commerce that union relations should be conducted in the toughest possible manner and a good deal of trench warfare might be a good way of achieving something. That has given rise to a culture almost where people look for signs of what they perceive to be toughness in the people they are affecting. I don't think that leads us anywhere. If you are trying to change a culture it is much tougher than adopting the stance which one normally sees. Changing a culture at the Abbey National from being a money lender to a housing finance organisation was much tougher than sitting there and conducting a money lending operation which I could have done. Now I could have come in and followed the lines that are traditional here, of confrontation and posturing, of widespread mistrust and lack of mutual respect in the way you talk to people.

Now I thought the industrial relations problem was one of the most interesting things I could tackle here. I was given to getting



management and FoCs together and addressing chapels, and I prefer to do that on my own, so they can assess me and they can hear from me what I want to say. I think that they have found it unusual. Certainly a lot of people have not had that experience before of listening directly to their chairman. But it is the only way I think they are going to hear what I believe. If I try and do it through formal processes or indirectly, it will not get across and I have not got a lot of time to bring about the change anyway. You've really got to get at it straight away.

It was interesting last night when I got all the senior FoCs together. They're very forthright, that's one thing about them, they're very forthright, well-informed, interested, and they're not just going to sit there and say nothing, which is what you find in other companies. In my experience the majority of any audience sit and say nothing and one or two people ask questions that you receive politely. That's not the case here. Whatever they think here they say. And there's no messing about with that. But one man said to me last night I've been disappointed with you as a chairman because you've so far let one or two people get away with things instead of taking them on. That was the general gist of it. He said, well we expected a tough line. I said what do you think would be tough? Do you think it would be for me to sit in my office knowing that if I find myself out of a job tomorrow I'm not likely to starve and simply say no to everything that didn't appeal to me without any negotiation, just bloody-mindedly saying I'm going to take you on in a macho sort of way — which a lot of people expect — get into confrontation, get into the old style trench war, stop the paper, and then after a lot of blood letting carry on with worsened industrial relations? I said to him what is much tougher is to try and change a culture when everyone thinks you're naive and where you've got to spend as much time running your day-to-day affairs as you are going around talking to everybody. That is tough.

But what things specifically do you do to change the culture? Given that there are two things that you cannot avoid: there is an institutional division between the ownership and control of the company and those people who work for it — it is a conventional company with

proprietors, with shareholders whose interests have to be served. And secondly, one of the problems, one of the essential problems that many Fleet Street newspapers face is that they carry far too many people working in certain sections. How can you go to people and say I'm going to change the culture, change the way we do things here, and it's going to involve a lot of people losing their jobs and we're still the bosses anyway?

I've been here a short while, I've looked at the business. We have a product, a new product, every day. We have a capacity to build up the product during the day, produce it overnight, and see that it reaches millions of customers in the morning. Now that requires a great deal of skill. In fact, I'm almost tempted to say that if there were no such things as newspapers and you got a group of people together who said let's set about producing this today and distributing it tomorrow, there'd be bound to be some in this day and age who would say that's impossible. There are not many adventurers. Same as the building society. If anyone had said let's start a business which borrows short and lends long and defies all the laws of finance, the sort of people I worked with in the Building Societies Association Council would have said not on your life! So that if you look at what we are doing it is the impossible. It is also true that we have a vast customer base of people who want to get the product, are upset if they don't get this product, will ring if they don't get this product and so on. How many businesses are in that fortunate position? And having got into that position, we then for internal reasons prevent the customer having the opportunity to buy the newspaper every day and at the time he expects to get it. We lose copies, produce late, blame each other, inflict on the customer. So we've got to put our minds to seeing that we do not self-destruct. This is like one enormous family and in every family there is dissension, tension, different sorts of characters all trying to operate as a family unit. I've noticed that whenever the family is threatened, that is when it brings out the best.



That seems not a bad start as a rather sort of headmasterly address, but the thing is that there is a real conflict of interest in an enterprise of this sort, whatever its position.

Where's the conflict?

If, for example, people behave differently so that the company is very successful financially, how far do they benefit from that increased financial security and what control they have over what goes on in the enterprise itself? How do you deal with those two things?

I don't think there is any conflict. Because if we proceed as I intend then we shall eliminate that conflict. First of all you must start from the point that it is in everyone's interest here to see that what I've described as the production and delivery to the reader goes on unchecked, our first priority is that. You've got to persuade people that it is in their interests that that should be the case. Secondly, you have to create a corporate structure which gives the people that work here a real stake in a proprietorial sense. That is a structure which automatically and in a direct way rewards their efforts and which increases the wealth and the profitability of the company. Then you make it possible for them to acquire shares over and above that on preferential terms, that gives them the chance of getting a bigger stake. So you then have a real worker interest in the company. You then must see — and we've made a start in the pension area — that a board of directors is constructed with equal representation. We've just had a pension board meeting, it was one of the best pension board meetings I've ever attended, because of the interest of these people. One thing I find a revelation with union people, they do read the rules. I find that quite refreshing. It's much better than having directors who nod off after the first few minutes. And I have had to deal with far too many of those.

You say that principle should be extended to the board?

I know there's a conflict as to whether you should have people on a main board because you start saying that they are not your representative, there's one fellow on there and there's a separation from the workers. I was floating the idea yesterday with the unions that we might have some form of consultancy council which would represent all shades of opinion. So there might be some forum. I think we have to work at it and find something, it might be new. It certainly will be new in Fleet Street. We've got to work at that. Now having got that, if that means that there's a greater incentive and involvement here far beyond employer and employee relationships and that produces greater wealth which it must do, we can then begin to address our minds to some of the problems in Fleet Street.

Now until such time as we can develop other products for other markets, and that could mean new titles, free sheets, magazines, a number of other things that we're looking at, you have to ask yourself whether we are properly manned in relation to what we are doing. I would think that, if only because of the loss of market share, we are carrying too heavy a cost base at the moment, most of which is attributable to over-manning. One advantage we have is that the age profile of the company is such that the numbers who will be retiring over the next two to three years are significant enough to cover whatever problem we have. Now, lots of people in the trade unions here see themselves as a custodian of a job and I can see the merit in that. But it might be that we have to accept some sacrifice in that regard to get ourselves into the position to

expand. Because at the moment we are not generating enough profit to invest.

But what you're saying is: if some people lose their jobs and jobs go, there is this vague promise that at some time in the future we will employ more people. Why should anyone believe you when you say that?

Well why should anyone believe you when you say anything?

Well the reason why they wouldn't believe most newspaper proprietors is that they've told them a pack of lies about that sort of thing in the past.

That's right. I have a notion from my solicitor days that the truth has a ring about it that nothing else has. It doesn't always work but that is why the British legal system has some merit in seeing that there is an opportunity for someone to be cross examined at their case. And even the most fanciful case on paper looks rather different when you've got a person standing in a box who is explaining himself. I can only hope that they will believe me. I can only do my best.

One way of looking at it is that you already have your heavy cost base, but it is actually a cost base that could produce extra product. You've spoken yourself of launching two newspapers. Why don't you use your existing cost base to launch those?

That is what I have in mind. Because you see before you start saying, let's get rid of this spare capacity, which is not a very happy way to describe people, before you say we don't need these folk, you must ask is there any way in which we can arrange our affairs to make use of capacity? And one of the attractive things about this company at the moment is you've got people willing to work, work that needs to be done, and the two are not being put together. Now if there is something that we could be doing and it's right that we should, given that we've got the money to do it, that it makes a profit, then we ought to put our minds to doing it. Now I was examining pretty early on what we might do. And it just seems there were two gaps in the market, one was the London evening paper which was said to be kite flying when they have now seen a dummy of it; I wouldn't have gone to that trouble if it was kite flying. I mean I can fly a kite without actually making it. The other thing was it just seemed to me that there was room for what I would describe as a radical tabloid of the Left. All I want to demonstrate to people here is that I'm not a man who believes in contraction. I believe that we might have to go through some hard times to get into a position as a springboard for the future. You cannot ignore the fact that there has been no major investment in this group for a very long time and I'm not in the happy position of having the wherewithal immediately to do it. So we've got to put our minds to that.

The simplest thing in terms of moving swiftly towards profitability would be to allow Manchester to close. Because it costs this company some £19½ million in costs. But I preferred to say to people here let's get back to the drawing board and see whether a rearrangement of our affairs, giving Manchester a new future, wouldn't produce in Manchester what we've done in Scotland, which is an outstanding success. And it so happens that that seems to be the way things are moving. Again I've been rubbished for thinking in those terms. It is suggested that it doesn't make commercial sense, it's far better to scythe through a workforce and close it down. Or don't invest, save your money. Time will tell.

I wondered how you voted in the last general election.

Well I didn't vote in the last general election.

Have you voted previously?

Previously I voted in a variety of ways depending on what at the time I thought was likely to be the best form of government. Had I voted last time I don't mind admitting that I would have only seen one prospect of any sort of government being possible and that was the one that is there now because what semblance of unity, co-ordination or ability to govern was being shown by the Labour Party?

I think that's a very interesting answer. It shows to some extent that a major political interest of yours is good government. And that that is almost a thing that you perceive as being value free, and yet from many of the things that you have said about the way this business should be controlled and also what you've said elsewhere about the way that building societies should work, it's quite clear that you do have a set of values that happen to be a set of values that are not readily recognisable in people that run large financial institutions or big companies. What I can't really work out is what you think the purpose of enterprises of this sort should be in the particular form of capitalist society that we live in now.

Well fortunately I've been connected with enterprises that always stood for rather more than money-making. Although money-making has to be an important part of it because if it doesn't make money, all sorts of things happen and it doesn't survive. But I had

great difficulty yesterday trying to explain to somebody that I'm only attracted to something with a sense of purpose. I've never done a job where I didn't feel strongly that I want to do that. I'd get out if I didn't. I think what these newspapers stand for and what our democracy needs is the freedom of expression which, despite what people say, is still part and parcel of this newspaper group; something that can criticise objectively — and that should include criticising even a government of the Left. In the last business it would not have satisfied me had it been a money-lending business. That is not what that business was started for. It was started to give the artisan a means of housing himself. But I happen to be lucky enough to have done jobs I enjoy, even as a solicitor, where I didn't really make a lot of money — I worked for a poor people's solicitor for a while, but there was no denying the worth of what I was doing.

But what does that make you say about the way that other people should run their affairs, because it's all right for Thornton, he's found two little niches during his life or big niches to have quite a nice time in, but there are millions of other people in the world struggling with the question of what should the purpose of a business enterprise be, how should our society be organised?

Well that is due to a failure from the top in how they should start. Very few institutions have any desire to change, they are so organised that they can't change — very rapidly anyway. That's why they tend to be elephantine. Anyone who has a spirit of adventure, is not likely to have come through the corporate structure and very often is squeezed out at the bottom. So that is responsible for a lot of it. I wouldn't say there aren't the people around. It's just there are not many opportunities for those people

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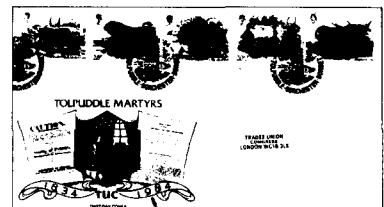
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to bring about change. That is because we have developed over many years the corporate man who doesn't have any imagination, or sense of adventure, and likes to keep his eyes and ears open, his mouth shut and just keep an eye on the opportunity which will give him the top job, not for the reasons that I would want it but for the good life.

I agree with a lot of that, and I often meet a lot of people who have a real sense of adventure and a real idea about what should happen in businesses, and frequently they are people who work in those businesses. One of the things that interests people like me on the Left was Lucas Aerospace, where a whole movement arose among the shop stewards to produce alternative plans for the way that company could be run. Therefore also what interests me is how you transform those large corporate bureaucracies that are completely inaccessible to the people who work in them but clearly have as much right and as many good ideas to make them behave quite differently.

You only ever do it if the man at the top happens to be wanted or employed or brought on to bring that about. Now I think the Abbey National underestimated me, they underestimated my intentions and when I moved over to this job, I think Reed International have underestimated me. And I think so have other people. I'm bound to say that I do have a tendency to irritate an awful lot of people by the controversial nature of what I do and the way I do it. I don't intend to upset people but it does. To float a company required a chairman who would be acceptable to the Mirror for what it stands for, its readership and what it stands for, who could be trusted and who would be acceptable to the City. It may have been better had I not indicated so early on that I wanted to proceed on the basis of ambitious plans. Most people would say well it's all very well having ambitious plans but in a Fleet Street environment that's naive. I happen to believe that it's not. I firmly believe I can carry these people with me and change the face of this sort of business but there's no precedent for it, so one can understand the worries of those people and I've made a mistake in worrying them. I suppose it would have been much better had I kept quiet for the first few weeks about what I might do, until I had shown that I'd got the workforce behind me.

You nearly always describe what can be done in terms of what the person at the top can do and how they can affect the framework in which things happen, how they can change things. You never say that the motor for change or the idea can come from down below, from beneath the top. Why do you not answer the questions in those terms?

I can see that it needs a groundswell to eventually give you the means of bringing about change, because you've got to strike a chord. But it's the middle layer that I think is the problem, and that is why without any changing of heart or mind at the top, you will not get through that morass. And so often the people at the bottom who have a lot of ideas are stifled to conform to what the middle mass wants.

There's one thing about your own past which I do not understand. I can understand where you came from had a profound influence on the way that you have set about the work you've done, and where you've worked, but I can't understand why you went to Cassel Arenz, the City fringe bank.

Neither can I. It was tough and very rough. I spent four years there in the City swallowing hard until I could stand it no longer. I'd gone there because I'd found myself a qualified solicitor

having almost exhausted myself in the process of qualifying by evening study of about 40 hours a week, with no money to set up a practice. I thought the best prospects of making money was to go into commerce, and I might widen my experience. Well I certainly did that. And that experience affects my attitude towards so-called City views and institutions. It's a curious thing, when someone is in favour with the City, he can do no wrong. And it doesn't matter how lacking anyone may be in principles. It's very odd the minute you fall out of favour, that all the things that were known and not commented upon suddenly were obvious to everybody. It always happens. I find it very difficult.

I did put myself on a secure footing, but I accept what you say. I thought that was a hard school of learning and for the only time in my life I found I went into work in the morning with something of a heavy heart. And I left because I was required to construct deals on the basis that there was very little left in it for the other side. I used to insist that they brought their own lawyers. Now most of them — people you dealt with — brought the top men, but I came to a crunch point, and the final straw was when we were about to construct a deal which really stripped someone down. I suggested they bring their solicitor and he turned out to be a country solicitor who was the grandson of a man who'd been the solicitor for my wife's family. He was completely and utterly out of his depth. And I kept pointing out this, that and the other, that he'd not spotted, until it got to the point where my boss asked me to leave the room and said 'who are you working for?' And I said 'well I don't think I'm going to work for you'. And he said I was 'unsophisticated'. I'm now naive. Funny thing, you see, when money rules, anyone who doesn't pursue that course, is naive and unsophisticated, a crackpot or reckless. It takes some doing to continue pursuing my particular line, but I happen to feel that social conscience is important in a business and it's surprising how often it makes good financial sense because if it didn't, I wouldn't last five minutes. It just so happens that the things that have needed doing have also given rise to commercial success in what I've done. And the things that have not been done out of social conscience, but have been done for purely monetary reasons, somehow come to grief.

But there are quite a lot of things that need doing that it is hard to see ever making financial sense.

You will never know until you try. I wonder, when you get right down to it. First of all, they give all sorts of employment, better investment and then what happens afterwards is often unexpected.

But they cannot be justified as commercially attractive in narrow terms. You have to do your accounting in a completely different way to justify them.

Initially. Because you've got to say well where is this taking us. The pay-off may be later, but it's often bigger.

But the point about that is that it's not the sort of vision that any institution in the private sector of the economy is capable of having.

Well I don't agree with that either. Because it was said when I was at the Abbey that you could not go and invest in the inner cities because you could not get the security for the money you advanced. I proved it was better to be there. And it was a fact. But the accountant said no. You've got to be prepared to challenge accepted views. And risk a rubbing when you do it. □

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Pension funds wield enormous financial power. The trade unions are well-represented within them. But the labour movement is failing to develop a strategy for them.

Gareth Locksley & Richard Minns

Pension Power

THE CONSERVATIVE government has embarked upon a large programme of privatising publicly owned assets. This programme involves pension funds in the purchase of shares in the privatised companies. Pension funds are important because of their size and because they represent the deferred earnings of millions of employees in the public and private sectors. These employees may well have views about the financial and economic merits of buying into privatised companies which ought to be taken into account. In some cases these views have been expressed through trade unions, and if they were taken into account they could present significant difficulties for the privatisation programme.

Over half the workers in Britain are obliged to pay part of their earnings into pension schemes as a condition of employment. These payments are then put into a 'fund' which is invested in company shares, government securities, offices, shops, industrial premises and farmland, in order to earn a return to help pay for pensions. These investments were worth about £3 billions in 1960 but are now valued at over £100 billions. The size of these funds has increased so dramatically that pension funds now own nearly 30% of all company shares quoted on the stock market. Companies like Unilever and Shell run pension funds (and the funds were valued at over £1 billions and £1.5 billions respectively in April 1984), as well as public bodies like the National Coal Board (£5 billions), the joint funds of the Post Office and British Telecom (nearly £7 billions), British Rail (£2.5 billions), and local authorities like the Greater London Council, and the six metropolitan county councils (together worth over £3.5 billions).

Many pension funds, especially the largest, have employee representatives on the boards of trustees which are responsible for the investment policy of the funds. These employee representatives usually have less than 50% of the places on the

boards, so it would be a mistake to exaggerate their influence. In addition, pension funds are advised or managed by City institutions, chiefly the merchant banks and firms of stockbrokers, which are extremely influential in the determination of investment policy.¹ It is, however, still worth exploring the issue of investment policy and privatisation because people have a right to know how their savings are being invested. The way savings are invested may well contradict people's wider social and moral concerns.

What is at stake

Since 1979 we have witnessed the privatisation of all or part of BP (begun by the previous Labour government), the National Freight Corporation, British Aerospace, International Computers, Ferranti, British Sugar, Cable and Wireless, Amersham International, Britoil, Associated British Ports, Enterprise Oil, Jaguar and others, raising a total of around £3 billions for the Government. The future privatisation programme includes British Telecom, British Airways, Royal Ordnance factories, Sealink, Land Rover, Unipart, National Bus, and some parts of gas and electricity. This remaining part of the privatisation programme could raise over £10 billions, with the largest amount coming from the privatisation of British Telecom, which alone could raise between £3 and £4 billions, more than the whole privatisation programme has raised so far.

Privatisation has been questioned by trade unions, but also by some other commentators. For example, the British Telecom unions have fought a long struggle against privatisation of BT. Naturally the unions are concerned about the large job losses which have been forecast, but they have also argued that there will be increased charges for residential users, a loss of public kiosks, and a deterioration in the quality of emergency services.² Ordinary business users have also expressed concern about the future of telephone charges which may only benefit the large

Table 1 The 'Privatisation' List and Some of the Major Unions Affected

BT	POEU, UCW, STE, CMA, CPSA
BP	(Activity of BP diverse; the chemicals, petroleum and oil are represented by TGWU)
Amersham	TASS, CSEU
ICL	ASTMS
Ferranti	Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU)
Fairey	CSEU, TGWU, ASTMS, TASS
British Aerospace	CSEU
British Sugar	TGWU/GMBATU/ACTSS (TGWU)/ALLEU(E)
Cable and Wireless	Mainly overseas
National Freight	NUR
National Bus	TGWU
Brit Oil	APEX
British Airways	TGWU, GMBATU, AUEW(E), EEPTU, NUSMWHDE, AUEW (TASS), FTAT, UCATT
British Airports	AUEQ(E), EEPTU, UCATT, GMBATU, NASMWHDE, TGWU, CPSA, SCPS, CSU, IPCS
British Steel Corporation	ISTC, NUB, TGWU, GMBATU
British Nuclear Fuels (Industrials)	TGWU, EEPTU, AUEW(E), UCATT, NUSMWHDE, GMBATU
(Staff)	IPCS, CPSA, SCPS, CSU
British Gas (NJIC Manual) (Craft Maintenance) (NJC Staff)	TGWU, GMBATU
British Shipbuilders (Manual, Staff) (Managerial Staff)	CSEU
Sealink	EMA
(Shore Based) (Ratings) (Officers)	NUR, TSSA
Jaguar	NUS
Rover	NMAOA, REOU, AUEW(E)
Rolls Royce	CSEU
Unipart	CSEU
Associated British Ports	CSEU
Royal Ordnance Factories	TGWU
	EEPTU, CSEU

multinational companies. Even manufacturers of equipment, such as GEC and Plessey have been unsympathetic to privatisation because they fear that a privatised BT will source overseas.

In other cases of prospective privatisation, six rail and sea unions launched a campaign in March against privatisation of Sealink which, they argue, could lead to closure of routes, further asset sales, reductions in employment, and deterioration in pension arrangements. Workers at Royal Ordnance Factories have already staged a one-day strike against privatisation. In addition, stockbrokers Laing and Cruickshank have asserted that privatisation as a whole will not succeed in reducing the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement and could lead to an increase in interest rates and inflation.³

The trade unions have been the most strident in their criticisms of privatisation. Consider, therefore, Table 1 which shows those public assets that have already been sold off and the targets for forthcoming sales. It also shows the major unions affected by the privatisation. Table 2 illustrates the size of some pensions funds including those of the metropolitan au-

thorities whose future is threatened by forthcoming legislation. Taken together the two tables have a significant overlap. Many of the companies subject to privatisation have pension funds which will be taking part in the privatisation programme. The trade unions in these companies, despite being opposed to privatisation, will be contributing to pension funds which will be buying the privatised assets. Many of these funds have already acquired shares in the companies so far privatised, the Post Office fund in British Aerospace for example, West Midlands County Council in Amersham, GLC in Cable and Wireless, and so on. Is there any scope for taking action on pension fund investment in privatised companies?

The mineworkers court case

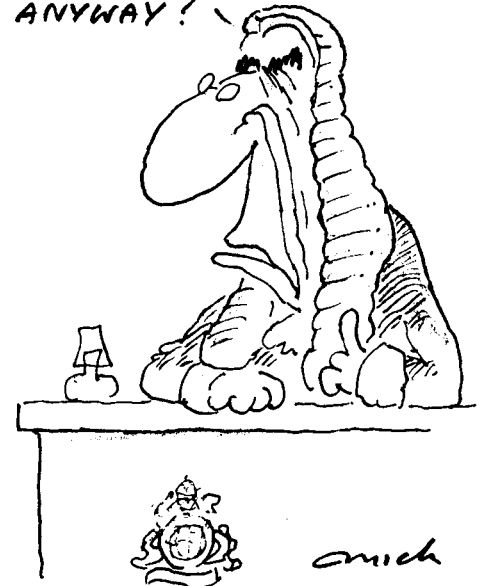
The recent mineworkers pension fund case is of direct relevance here. In April 1984 five trustees of the Mineworkers' Pension Fund appointed by the National Coal Board took the five NUM trustees to the High Court. The NUM trustees had blocked the implementation of the fund's 1982 investment plan on the grounds that the fund should only invest in Britain in order to boost the economy, and that the fund should not invest in energy industries which compete with coal. The judge ruled against the NUM trustees on the grounds that they had failed to show that their preferred policies would benefit the fund's beneficiaries.⁴

What the judgement established was that, for trustees, the financial interests of the beneficiaries were paramount. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see how a better tactical case could have been presented by the NUM, showing, amongst other things, how the loss of jobs will affect the narrow financial interests of beneficiaries because pension entitlements depend on remaining in work. It is clear that the control of investment policy in the City is a sensitive and crucial issue which could end in litigation if there is any question about the financial interests of beneficiaries being threatened 'for political or social purposes' by union controlled trustees.

What the case did establish was that although the social, political or moral views of the trustees were irrelevant to pension fund investment, *the views of the members of a trust* – the ultimate beneficiaries – were not. The judge said that there were circumstances where the 'benefit' of beneficiaries, which had to be made a trustee's paramount concern, did not inevitably or only mean their financial

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benefit. The judge used the example of a temperance society where the actual or potential beneficiaries were all adults with strict views on moral and social matters, condemning alcohol, tobacco and popular entertainment, as well as armaments. It could be well understood in a self-selecting body of this sort that it might not be for the 'benefit' of those beneficiaries to know that they were getting larger returns from such investments than if the trustees had put the funds in more acceptable investments. Obviously, a pension fund is not such a self-selecting body, but there may be a case for the strongly held views of present members of a fund to be taken into account, not as a point of law, but as a backcloth to other arguments about the primacy of their financial interests.

The case for pension fund opposition

Many banks and stockbrokers who advise and manage pension funds also handle the privatisation programme for the govern-

Table 2 Major UK Pension Funds; Capital Value

	April 1984 £ millions
Post Office/British Telecom ¹	6850.0
National Coal Board	5000.0
Electricity Supply	3000.0
British Rail	2550.0
British Steel	2150.0
British Gas	2050.0
BP	1591.4
Airways	1407.0
Water Authorities	824.0
Merchant Navy	806.2
UK Atomic Energy	796.1
Strathclyde Regional Council	750.0
Greater London Council	716.0
Greater Manchester Council	686.2
West Midlands County Council	680.0
BL	664.5
British Aerospace	600.0
Rolls Royce	515.2
London Transport	505.2
West Yorkshire County Council	500.0
Civil Aviation Authority	454.6
Merseyside County Council	405.8
South Yorkshire County Council	312.8
National Bus	279.5
British Shipbuilders	276.0
South of Scotland Electricity	272.6
ICL	232.5
British Airports	154.4
Cable and Wireless	153.9
Northern Ireland Electricity	112.0
British Sugar	89.0

Source: *Pension Funds and Their Advisers* 1984

¹Richard Minns *Pension Funds and British Capitalism* Heinemann 1980.

²BTUC *British Telecom: How selling it off will harm Britain* 1983.

³Laing and Cruickshank, *Economic and Monetary Review* October 1983.

⁴Judgement by Sir Robert Megarry in the *Mineworkers' Pension Scheme trusts; Cowan and Others v Scargill and Others*.

ment and companies concerned. These include stockbrokers such as Rowe and Pitman, Phillips and Drew, Hoare Govett, Cazenoves, de Zoete and Bevan, and merchant bankers such as S G Warburg, Kleinwort Benson, Hill Samuel, Rothschilds, Morgan Grenfell, and Lazards. S G Warburg, for instance, is not only advising BT on its conversion to a privatised company, but it also manages part of the Post Office and BT's pension funds. As a first step it would be sensible and prudent for trustees to ensure that they had advice from managers where there was no potential conflict of interest.

Control of investment policy in the City is a sensitive and crucial issue

But next we need to consider the financial arguments about privatisation from the investment point of view. The most important argument here is the acceptance at the 1982 Labour Party conference of a TUC/Labour Party statement which argued that 'the next Labour government will reacquire the shares of denationalised concerns by paying for them exactly what the government received for them'. Compensation would be given only in the case of 'proven need and at a level that ensures that the recipients do not gain from their investments', although investors will be allowed to retain the dividends that they have received.

It has been said that pension fund managers are unperturbed about a future Labour government's renationalisation 'threat'. Pension funds, they argue, can sell the shares concerned when such a prospect emerges. However, this would create such a massive collapse of the share price that most funds would be losers. This possibility raises a serious question about the financial merits of buying shares in privatised companies. For example, it has been estimated that the major assets privatised from 1979 to the end of 1983 have been undervalued by 20% in relation to what they were worth at the beginning of 1984.⁵ In other words they have risen in value on the stock market by £400 millions since their initial launch. This is supposed to be bad news for the taxpayer who has helped to build up the publicly owned assets and who could have received more if the price had been higher, but good news for the investor who has benefitted from the low offer price. This increase in capital value would have helped to boost the total returns to pension funds from their invest-

ments. However, renationalisation at the original price would wipe out this gain, and depress returns. So on financial grounds alone privatised assets could be judged to be a poor investment where the returns were not commensurate with the risk.

Political risk is a concept which is always considered by pension funds, usually in relation to investment in particular countries. It may be decided, for example, that political uncertainty and the possibility of civil strife may be sufficient reason for not investing in a particular area. The most common geographical region affected by this investment policy is Southern Africa. Some investors and major companies also take the view that possible revolution leading to nationalisation of privately owned assets without compensation certainly precludes an area from further investment. These are assessments of risk which investment institutions are making all the time and which affect the returns which are expected. Insurance policies commonly contain exclusion changes or additional premiums for loss of property due to civil disturbance and riots, especially in certain parts of the United Kingdom.

There is nothing new, therefore, about financial institutions taking a view of political risk. But what about the broader concerns of the members of a fund? The BT case provides an interesting example of how the members of a fund could clearly establish their views.

Unless the implications of the policy are acted on now, the Labour Party will go into an election with a millstone around its neck

A 20-week campaign of action against the privatisation of BT was organised by the unions. The campaign included strike action by 1,400 POEU workers at BT International (BTI) and about 1,000 elsewhere. Members of UCW also came out on one day lightning strikes. The campaign had mass support with the unions. It virtually bankrupted the POEU and subscriptions have since been raised. At least £6 million was spent by the unions on the campaign which paid the full wages of striking POEU members. A levy was also raised on all POEU members of £25, of which at least 80% has already been collected. British Telecom Unions Committee have spent £2 million in the last 18 months (included in the £6 million) on the

campaign against privatisation. In addition, the strike was damaging to workers at BTI. In their absence new 'systems enhancement' equipment was installed. This had been blacked for several months because of its job loss consequences. New working practices were introduced. Workers at BTI returned to work on humiliating conditions.

The voluntary actions, extent of mass support, the personal financial costs incurred by the members through their unions and the consequent worsening of conditions clearly demonstrate the members' strongly felt moral and social objections to the privatisation of BT, which should be used as a broader context in which to raise the questions about the financial risk of investment.

Where now?

Public sector and local authority funds in Table 2 amount to *over a third* of all pension fund assets. And this table excludes key funds where the companies are private already, such as Lucas, ICI, Shell, Imperial Group, Unilever, Ford, GEC, Allied Lyons and so on (a range of funds in the top 50 largest pension funds), but where there is union representation on the boards of trustees. It is not too difficult to construct a list of major pension funds where the labour movement has representation and which represent *well over half* of all pension fund assets. A strategy aimed at mobilising this influence could substantially increase the influence of alternative investment strategies in the financial markets.

Pension funds are also an important part of more general alternative economic strategies. But little practical consideration has been given to the mechanisms by which the huge funds can be mobilised for investment in the regeneration of British industry. There is scepticism and incredulity in the City financial community when alternative strategies are raised. It is not difficult to see why this is so in the case of privatisation. What should be remembered by a Labour Party in opposition is that the policy to renationalise without compensation *cannot wait* until the election of a Labour government. By then pension funds will be substantial investors in privatised companies. The City will be able to launch a successful campaign accusing Labour of undermining the financial entitlements of future pensioners by 'confiscating' assets. In other words, unless the implications of the policy are acted on *now*, the Labour Party will go into an election with a millstone around its neck. If the

policy is not going to be acted on now, and there is little sign of action so far, then the labour movement needs to reconsider its position on privatisation in order to develop an alternative policy to renationalisation.

The trade unions listed in Table 1 represent some of the most powerful sections of organised labour. Several unions are spread throughout the privatisation targets. A co-ordinated strategy to gain a significant degree of control over the direction of pension contributions by these unions and local authorities could seriously question the sale of public assets. There

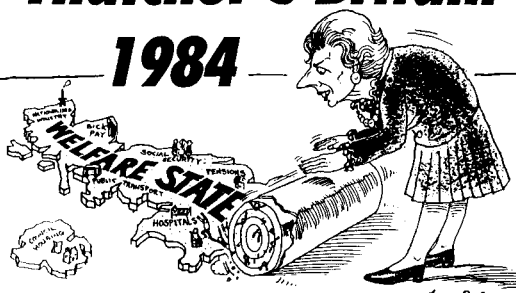
is some doubt in the City itself as to whether the investment institutions will be able to absorb the sheer size of the assets being sold. Any further worries about the progress and pricing of the assets being offered for sale could create a major upset in financial markets.

In conclusion, there is a real danger that labour movement policy for pension fund investment is largely rhetorical and can be discounted by the City. We tend to assume that a future Labour government will easily manage the issues involved. Control over pension fund investment, and its relation to broader concerns which affect

pension fund members and society in general, deserves the same degree of attention given to wages, conditions, hours of work, health and safety, the role of women and racial equality by the labour movement. The Labour Party in conjunction with the TUC should, with some urgency, organise a conference for trade unions, pension fund trustees and local authorities to decide how in practical terms to implement the policy on privatisation and renationalisation. □

⁵Christopher Hulne 'Bad Timing Lost Us £400m' *Guardian* January 12 1984.

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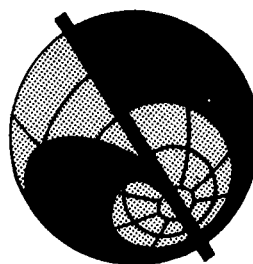


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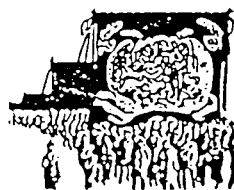
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being opened up, and you can begin to get a feel of the labour that underpinned gracious living in a society based on privilege. I find the kitchens the most revealing. The sheer amount of work that had to be done to maintain a large household is incredible; and the enormous variety of skills called on is conveyed by the array of cooking utensils and cleaning equipment. What these bring home to you especially is the way that they had to produce the whole means of subsistence. Animals had to be slaughtered, butchered, cured and prepared even before what we now would call

cooking would begin; just as the oven had to be cleaned and got ready much in advance of the ten minutes or so we need to warm an oven. The kitchens reveal a total process of producing the means of life; and we know who did all that production, and for whom.

This emphasis on the life below stairs is one that the National Trust is developing. One of its most popular properties is Quarry Bank Mill at Styal in Cheshire, where one can see not only how a group of working class people worked in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but some-

thing of how they lived besides working, where they slept, shopped and worshipped. Few stately homes get beyond showing the working conditions below stairs – they need to open up the living quarters as well. We need to appreciate the *whole* nation's heritage.

A visit to a stately home is both an indulgence in the fantasy of gracious living and a chance to think about how such living has been produced in the past. It is both a pleasure and an education. But I must admit that I am loth to go to one that doesn't have a tea room.



Quarry Bank Mill, Styal, Cheshire – well worth a visit. Open March-June and September-November: Tuesday-Sunday; July and August: everyday; winter months: Saturday and only.

WRITING ON THE WALL FOR THE GLC

Brian Hipkin

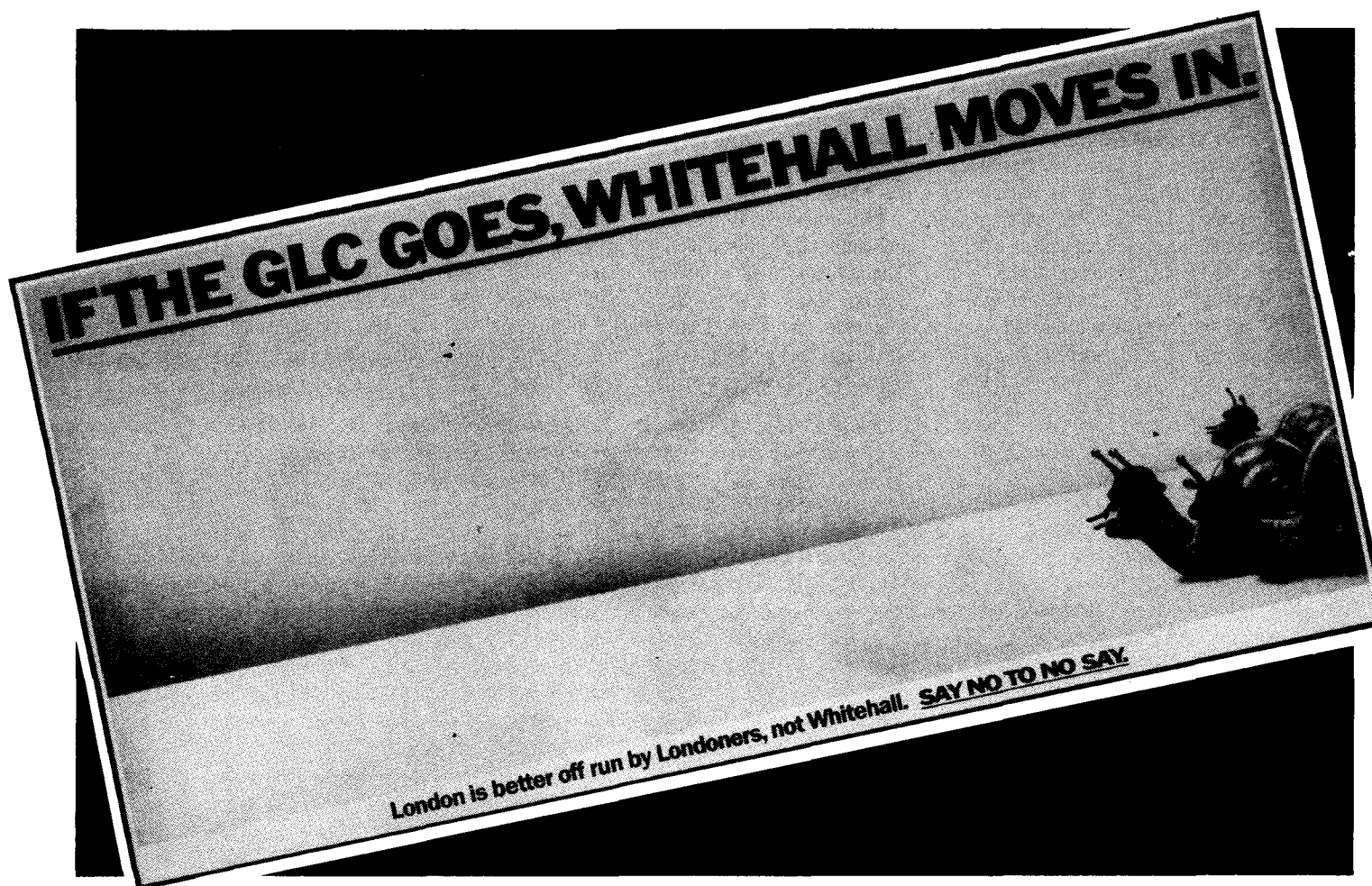
When it eventually came, 1984 saw the streets of London dominated not by giant telescreens but by posters proclaiming democracy in the capital to be dead. In a struggle to preserve the democratic rights of Londoners the GLC is fighting the

post-political age with the politics of the poster.

From late February this year Londoners have witnessed the most carefully planned and researched political advertising campaign since the selling of the Tories in

1979. A silent mobilisation by poster and advert, which for the first time in many years gave the Centre and Left in London a feeling of being on the winning side. If nothing else the campaign to save the GLC made you feel good to see your thoughts up

Channel Five



there in large print. But it is not as simple as all that. As Peter Hurd of the GLC's advertising agency Boase Massimi Pollitt (BMP) commented, 'there are some people who seem to think that you do a poster and you have solved the world's problems'.

By selecting the advertising world's 'agency of the year' to run a *Say No To No Say* campaign the GLC were following the path successfully beaten to the door of public opinion by NALGO and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. In a fight for their survival the GLC wanted to go on the offensive to be able to define areas of debate, to keep the Government guessing as to their next move. The resulting campaign was approached by BMP in the same way as any of their commercial accounts. Images and slogans were tested by MORI opinion polls and by panels of Londoners drawn from all shades of political opinion. They wanted to make the message as simple and as powerful as possible, to push the issues off the billboards into the pub and the homes of ordinary people. So in early March, Londoners were confronted with a simple statement from over 400 poster sites across

town *From now on you have no say in who runs London.*

Not the most political of messages but one that BMP's MORI backed research showed was the one that concerned Londoners the most. This first careful step was to be of crucial importance. By fighting not abolition but the cancellation of the 1985 elections the campaign did not base itself in the public mind as one of defending a leftwing Labour GLC, but one of protecting democratic rights. This struck a common chord in the collective memory of us all. We are seemingly prepared to put up with much if it bears the label 'democratically made'. For good or bad democracy is seen almost instinctively as an unqualified good. This unquestioned character renders it usefully apolitical in the eyes of ordinary people. Stuart Oliver, campaign manager at the GLC, believed that from the start the issues should be presented in such a way as to avoid alienating Conservative voters. This resulted in the black and white colouring of the posters, which unlike the majority of other GLC adverts, did not have the logo *Keep the GLC working for London.* Such a stark setting

loded the issue so firmly into the mind of the public that four months into the campaign the posters could 'Benson & Hedges' style drop completely the name of the GLC. By this time MORI polls were revealing that 90% of Londoners were aware of the issues being raised and 69% were actually opposed to the abolition proposals. As Stuart Oliver admits, this was an astonishingly high level of awareness for a public sector advertising campaign. Whilst this success was in part due to the scale of the campaign – 500 poster sites, full page adverts in both national and local press – one cannot underestimate the power of the response triggered off by the 'defend democracy' theme of the early part of the campaign.

In May the campaign turned to what would happen if Whitehall took over the running of London. At 490 sites, snails with bowler hats were seen crawling in from Whitehall to run London, whilst at 10 'supersites' politics met art. For two days at the end of May these sites had the simple black on white message *Imagine what London would be like run from Whitehall.* Then overnight these posters

were wrapped in a maze of red tape – giving us a physical answer to the question. These posters tell us more about the nature of 'style' in poster advertising than they do about the politics and power of the medium of posters. Since the Saatchi and Saatchi packaging of the Tories this reached almost mystical proportions, particularly on the Left.

Denied television and radio slots by the IBA's ban on political advertising, the GLC and BMP had no option but to turn to what advertising agencies admit to be a poor prime medium for putting a message across. But BMP's faith in posters as part of a wider campaign seems to have been borne out by their poll findings which indicate a massive turnaround in public opinion since the start of the campaign. This has in part been achieved by the speed and flexibility that was built into the

campaign from the time BMP won the account. By holding on to such a large number of poster sites over a period of time the GLC hope to be able to campaign as flexibly as possible, and at BMP they have prepared a variety of strategies to combat the twists and turns of the battle with the Government.

Given its ambivalent attitude towards the commercial ways of the advertising media, what lessons does this campaign hold for the Left in Britain? The politics of leisure have quite clearly been a major success within the GLC campaign. Festivals on the South Bank and elsewhere in London demonstrate the lessons already learnt in Europe where the Left operate within a more clearly defined arena of cultural politics. Following the line of the GLC, the creation of a 'space' where enjoyment can be experienced has to have an increasingly important rôle in the process of politicisation and political awareness in Britain.

In a sense, the GLC were lucky. Instead of proceeding with the Bill to abolish the GLC the Government introduced the cancellation of the planned 1985 GLC elections. Defending the right to vote in an age when all other rights are under attack, gave ordinary people something to organise around. Not the organisation of the politic-

al party but the organisation of their own thoughts and the setting of their minds against what the Government proposed.

Despite the fact that the campaign started from commonly held but unworkable notions of defending democracy the campaign has provided the basis for raising political consciousness in London. It will not be an easy journey to ferry political awareness on the backs of cartoon snails, yet out of potentially reactionary images has come massive support not only for the GLC but for the left Labour GLC. The results of the EEC elections in the London area seem to show that this groundswell of feeling is potentially capable of translating itself into support for the Labour Party. However the track record of the Labour Party at a national level raises doubts over what they would do to further this developing political consciousness. As the *Say No To No Say* campaign has signalled, there has to be a clear political will that can set out and guide the direction of an advertising campaign. At the last general election Labour's advertising agency were undoubtedly hampered by an ever changing set of instructions. This sad neglect of what should be seen as part of the whole political process, was at root a mixture of a political will that had become diluted, a rather 'sniffy' attitude to the advertising



media and a fatalistic belief that the media stacks the cards so much against the Left that it could not be used successfully as a weapon of political campaigning.

The proof of the GLC's campaign is in the retreating – the strength of opposition

marshalled and fuelled by the broad sweep of the *Say No To No Say* battle has made the Government turn on its heels and prolong the life of the Council by one year. Despite the fact that some could claim that this was an easy victory as the original

decision to postpone the elections was another of Patrick Jenkin's 'own goals'; the campaign should not now falter. Complete victory will be no easy task if and when it comes, this time the writing on the wall could be for the Government.

The torrential output of Elvis Costello continues unabated with the release of *Goodbye Cruel World* his ninth album in seven years. The punk balladeer, the pop artist, the terse enigma, the nice guy really, the soul man, the country boy at heart, the crooner and now the protest singer. If not exactly a chameleon, Costello has the exalted position of David Bowie a generation on. Figures of near universal reverence, they have the apparent capacity to roll with any trend. While Bowie relies on the self-perpetuating power of his image, Costello (emerging from the anti-heroism of punk) supposedly exists in a parallel universe of conscientious craft; constantly reworking riffs, melodies, even lyric styles from the 60s, 50s and earlier. Costello has the thinking rock critic's sense of good taste. And of course the thinking rock critic would have it that Elvis is the great songwriter of his generation. He is also the white star who seems to most embody the pop sensibilities of the Left. Nine albums of verbal pyrotechnics and now hard politics. Difficult to argue with.

At a time when the sovereignty of escapist pop (mostly meaning male self-pity) is in the ascendancy, it's good to see Elvis doing his defiant thing. What needs examining is whether, ultimately, Costello is making a substantially more political interjection into our culture than David Bowie and whether it's feasible for white male stars to be anything but cultural oppressors.

Costello, has, of course, always been a writer of 'radical' lyrics. From his exposés of ruling class hypocrisy to his detestation of anything militaristic, his records have been steeped in political denunciation. It was never part of his adopted image, however, to make these features explicit. He was concerned to let the songs do the talking. Yes, sure there were radical elements but they were just part of a songwriter's armoury, like love songs. Costello would have argued that there was no point in ramming messages down peoples' throats and that he was more subversive if his audience trusted him as a pop star rather than a politico.

ELVIS COSTELLO

Simon Lockwood

The theory was tested by the chart topping success of *Oliver's Army* — an implicitly anti-enlistment song which pointed to the funnelling effect of unemployment and would seem to support the case for stealth. How many record buyers, however, understood or gave a damn what the song was actually saying. How did Radio 1 DJs or *Top of the Pops* present the record? Did they have a choice? Of course they did.

Oliver's Army had the aural packaging of a conventional pop single. It was presented as such to most of the record buying public. It was not presented as an anti-enlistment song. Now the evidence of Frankie Goes to Hollywood's *Relax* (banned by Radio 1 for reasons of obscenity) suggests that radio has colossal power in defining what records mean to people. A catchy chorus with an apparently inconsequential lyric became, with delicious irony, explicit to all as a result of BBC censorship. With *Oliver's Army*, the effect worked in reverse.

But what of the thousands of people who bought the record and then had the chance to listen to Costello's lyric in the context only of their own sitting rooms? Well, yes, but listening to a lyric subservient to both the record's production and the 'soulfulness' of Elvis' singing. Crucially they are listening in an environment where the primacy of song has been devalued. The words are no longer the reason for a song existing. In 80s pop, the sound, the production, is the thing. This, of course, is the reason why packaging, selling, takes on

such disproportionate power. David Bowie based a career on, some would say made an art form of, the principle. The great majority of pop protest fits snugly within these conventions. The true ambitions of pop capitalism have been made glaring by the advent of the video. The puerile, even malevolent impulses which underscore many hits become unavoidable as the song recedes further into the background.

So, Elvis changed his stance. He advocated a Labour victory at the last General Election, he spoke out about 'Tory Britain' and about peace. He also wrote three directly political indictments which were not only highlighted at the end of his live show but were all released as singles (one in a version by Robert Wyatt). These were *Shipbuilding*, *Pills and Soap* and *Peace in our Time*.

Robert Wyatt's version of *Shipbuilding* was many people's single of 1982. Perfectly pitting the waste of the Falklands War against the despair of a depressed shipyard community, I would not have believed Costello could be so subtle, so selfless. No pompous sloganeering or rapid expressionism here, Costello lets the narrative do its stuff. Importantly Wyatt's vocal lets it do its stuff as well. All in all a perfect piece of storytelling, gripping, full of nuance and sung with perfect clarity. Great tune too, of course. An object lesson in political songwriting no less.

Well that's what I thought until I subsequently heard Costello's own version on *Punch the Clock* his last album. Steve Nieve ushers the whole thing in with Liberace power chords and there we are with Elvis and the boys on the stage at Caesar's Palace. I have always found British singers using American accents hard to take but it has never seemed so laughably inappropriate as when used for the persona of an unemployed shipworker.

The intimate, conversational feel so carefully constructed on the Wyatt version is mocked by Costello's decision to stake everything on the 'power' of his own vocal performance. A vocal performance which seeks to croon but creeks with the woode-



ness of his inflexions. What was he thinking of?

It is this obsession — with being seen to say the things he is saying — which is most

difficult to take in Costello, politically and aesthetically. He has always seemed to find performing a strain. Originally he disguised his discomfort with anger and even

though he has jollied up his facade considerably he still emerges as a rather brooding, resentful figure. He is emphatically a male hero. The effect is to make his jaundiced love songs misogynist and his political songs a celebration of his own enlightenment. He succeeds in not only rendering a lyric virtually inaudible through affectation but also in reducing its meaning to the one dimensional.

Pills and Soap and *Peace in our Time* are immediately much less interesting songs than *Shipbuilding*. Lacking the asymmetry of the latter's melody and rhyming schemes they are Elvis telling us more or less straight what he thinks about things. The irony of *Shipbuilding* becomes something closer to sarcasm and the removal of the constraints of character means he can run amok with the word play.

And, of course, no-one does it better. But ultimately in both songs isn't he saying something relatively simple in a complex way? Is not the density of Costello's art to be found in the juggling of poetic devices rather than ideas? Hypnotised by his own virtuosity his unceasing output suggests that, like the 60s Dylan, he is his own worst critic.

Politically, his self-obsession would be softened if Elvis were not actively conspiring with the glamourising aspirations of the pop industry which he purports to despise. And this is an area where innocence is complicity.

What of the new album, *Goodbye Cruel World*? It sounds suspiciously like a rushed job. Musically unmemorable, the words are often uneasily couched in the rhythm of the songs, Elvis relying on vocal dexterity (or 'soulfulness') to bluff his way through. Lyrically, it reflects Elvis' usual preoccupations — loveless relationships, joyless sex, the Martini crowd and, of course, social comment. It all comes across as rather cold. Costello has little feeling for the (mostly female) victims in the songs, and, where he does, the victim is usually himself (his singing makes it impossible to disassociate Elvis from the first person of his songs).

His wordiness for the part confuses rather than clarifies what he's getting at, his widescreen allusion hinting at connotations which leave one baffled. *Peace in our Time* stands aloof on the record simply because the directness of the song's emotional commitment transcends its pretentiousness. For all its puns and extended metaphors *Goodbye Cruel World* remains a humourless, unlovable album.

REVIEWS

Fellow Travelling

A survey of guide books

Passport – tick. Travellers cheques – tick. Guide book – tick. Sun-tan lotion. . . Guide books are as essential a part of the holiday-maker's armoury as the means of reaching the destination. The range of guide books on the market for the more popular holiday areas is bewildering, and rich enough even for more remote or less visited parts. But the dozen or so guides to, say, Normandy or Northern Italy, are not so many indistinguishable products, but proffer quite different interpretations of the area, suggesting quite different ways of holiday-making. Given that the Left is beginning to come to terms with the politics of leisure and pleasure, it seems right that we should look at the ways in which writers and publishers would guide us through that precious couple of weeks which, for those of us in work, are supposed to be a distillation of the year's pleasures.

Guide books come in series – there is a recognisable housestyle which distinguishes the *Michelin Guide* from the *Blue Guide*. Holiday-makers tend to stick to a particular series – once you've found your way round the *Michelin Guide* to Brittany, it makes sense to buy their guide to Normandy the following year. Each region of France is covered by a *Michelin Green Guide* to tourist sites, as are a number of foreign lands, regions or cities – Italy, New England or London – while the massive *Red Guides* to restaurants and hotels work on a country-by-country basis. A growing number of Green Guides are now available in English, but beware – these are sometimes shorter than the French originals, so check, and if your French is up to it, buy the original.

The *Green Guides* are written anonymously, and offer a strictly hierarchical approach to site-seeing. Some places are picked out as 'Worth a Journey' – Mont St Michel and Venice – some as 'Worth a Detour' – Bayeux and Bologna – while others are just 'Interesting'. Once you've reached your destination the Michelin people will keep you at it – starting with their extraordinary evaluation of how long you need to visit a place – Bologna, 3 hours; Venice, 3 days! Then you start going down the star scale; in Venice from St Mark's Basilica which scores three, to *il ghetto*, the old Jewish quarter which gave its name to the world, and gets none at all. It's worth

pointing out that while the *Red Guides* do highlight establishments which are fabulously expensive, they will also, with their bright red 'R', point you towards invariably excellent restaurants where you can eat for five or six quid a head: essential for anyone who believes that a nation's cooking can be as revealing as its art treasures.

The *Companion Guides* published by Collins adopt a much more conventional, bookish approach. They are written in continuous prose rather than being broken up, site-by-site, into staccato, heavily coded packets of words. What's more, they're signed – each one is written by a named author, and after a few pages you can detect his or her prejudices or foibles and make your own judgements accordingly: here, unlike in the *Michelins*, the values are out in the open. Adopting this more traditional literary style – though losing nothing in terms of clarity as *guide* books – the *Companion Guides* are often a straightforward pleasure to read. Nesta Roberts on Normandy, for example, is informative, witty and stylish; anyone who describes building concrete as 'a material which weathers so ungracefully that it is rotten before it is ripe' deserves to be read both as a traveller's guide and as a writer.

Benn's Blue Guides, pocket format like *Michelins*, but much fatter, fall half-way between the *Companion* and *Michelin Guides*. Absolutely stuffed with historical and artistic information, they are arranged around a series of journeys – from Verona to Venice, Rouen to Caen – just like the *Companion Guides*. Broken up by street maps and ground plans of churches and castles, they jump between a *Michelin*-style approach to packaged information and a more discursive style in which the authors display their own likes and dislikes. With their wealth of detail they are probably the most useful of the commonly available guides for serious site-seers, but, unlike the *Michelins*, they won't point you towards a good sandy beach or a forest that is pleasant to walk in. Never allowing themselves the more relaxed approach of the *Companion Guides*, they can hardly be termed a pleasure to read.

Most satisfying of all the traditional guide books are probably those which really belong to the tradition of travel literature, but which can be read as guides. Freda White's *Three Rivers of France*, just reprinted, and James Morris's justly famous *Venice* are obvious examples; the latter, telling you the membership of the Venetian Association of Hairdressers in



1797, tells you as much about the city's decline and decadence as any po-faced historical introduction in a conventional guide.

An important absence from the guides mentioned so far is simple information about a more living form of tourism than the admiration of great works of art or beauty spots – when market day falls in a particular town, or where you'd do as well to stroll around and have a slow drink in an old neighbourhood as to visit the cathedral or art gallery. What is lacking is information which helps the reader to appreciate day-to-day life in the area concerned, and pointers to popular traditions and lifestyles rather than quaint folkloric customs, as often as not preserved specially for the tourist trade.

RKP's new and rapidly growing series of *Rough Guides* is rather self-consciously aimed at the youth market, with information about the advisability of sleeping

rough on beaches, and cheap hotels and eating places. Parts of this 'radical' image are genuinely useful – pointing to the differences that women visitors can expect between aggressive Spanish *machismo* and the more restrained behaviour of the Portuguese male; others – radical chic run-downs on local politics – are best skipped.

In highlighting the enormous market at Barcelos in Northern Portugal, and advising those interested to visit it before entry into the EEC destroys the peasant economy which sustains it, the authors direct their readers towards a quite unique living spectacle. In celebrating the *atmosphere* of Barcelona, a city to visit for the vitality of its streets and plazas as well as for its Picassos and Miros, the Rough Guide takes a tentative step towards a new type of guide book, indicating some of the parts that other guides don't want to reach.

The truly political guide book, when published, will not just point the visitor towards the site of a house where a long-dead radical once lived, but towards the living traditions which distinguish one city from another, a nation from its neighbours. Bologna's Piazza Maggiore is not only beautiful, but seeing it early on a warm evening, swarming with people discussing the events of the day and the state of the world is an enormously instructive sight. It says much more about Italy, past and present, red and white, than a bed Garibaldi slept in. The first guide to point you there will be the one to buy.

Stephen Hayward

A Woman's Place is on Top

Annapurna, A Woman's Place
Arleen Blum, Granada £6.95

There are good reasons for expecting the account of the first American All Women's Himalayan Expedition to Annapurna to read differently from Bonington or Messner's Everest or K2 reminiscences. And **Annapurna, A Woman's Place** is of interest to a wider public than climbing punters. It accurately reveals the processes that go on behind the glamour of an expedition. It shows how women faced up to some of the hardest physical and mental challenges inherent in such a venture. The narration by Arleen Blum, the leader, is interspersed with dialogue and extracts from the women's individual diaries and this is effective in involving the reader in the thought processes of the women, to

participate fully in their anxieties, struggles and achievements.

Unlike their male predecessors who relied on winning sponsorship from major companies to raise funds, the women's Annapurna expedition addressed itself to a broader spectrum of support. Their campaign to raise the necessary \$80,000 crossed the narrow advertising and climbing catchment area, and appealed to the aspirations of women at large striving to achieve power in different areas of their own lives. The brilliantly conceived logo used on their fund raising tee-shirts, 'A Woman's Place is on Top', imaginatively expressed the spirit of the climb; it also expressed their belief in women's right to climb mountains, to test all their resources and commitment against the highest odds in the true spirit of adventure.

The conflicts which arose from this dual role of being both climbers and committed feminists are gradually unfolded; the significance of what it meant to be a group of women doing this on their own, and doing it very differently from most other expeditions, is drawn out. Previous accounts of such ventures have tended to stress the



feats of the individual battling with the elements. Here, in the women's Annapurna, was both a recognition that this excessive individualism often results in the demise of the expedition, and a deep commitment to working together collectively. The book reveals the problems that arose between the leader with her commitment to the collective ethic, and the team who reflected their own ambivalence by agreeing to do what was best for everyone's interest, but found it difficult to let go of individual goals. This is a theme which occurs frequently. Traditionally, on ex-

peditions of this character, differences might be expected to be overcome by deference to a strong leader. But working collectively challenges the notion of strong leadership and therefore makes more demands on the individuals present.

We are allowed through the pages of the book to participate in the agonising decision-making which accompanied Alison Chadwick and Vera Watson's bid for the second summit, that was to end tragically in their deaths. Although their motives are explored, there seems to be veiled criticism of this departure from the team spirit. It is frustrating that this is nowhere acknowledged or developed, particularly as Arleen Blum ends the book with an affirmation of all that the team had gained — strength, trust, warmth, friendship. It leaves us wondering whether this is no more than gratuitous sentimentality.

One of the most morale sapping aspects for the climbers was setting out in treacherous conditions brought about by the worst avalanching that Annapurna, already renowned for its avalanches, had seen. Perhaps it was their commitment to collective decision-making which allowed them to succeed where so many had failed; although it could be argued that it is taking liberation too far to attempt Californian-style consciousness-raising group dynamics in the rarified atmosphere of reduced oxygen level, subzero temperatures, and against the thunder of avalanches likely at any moment to sweep them into oblivion.

Though the Himalayas provides an unlikely context for an industrial relations problem, one whole chapter of the book is devoted to the Sherpas' strike which seriously jeopardised the climb. And the book is shot through with references to the difficulties faced in seeking co-operation from the Sherpas — men unused to working for women. A series of confrontations led to the Sherpas' final abandonment of their duties to go on strike, aptly timed to coincide with the summit bid. Whilst problems arising from the Sherpas' well-developed negotiating procedures were not particular to this expedition, nothing as drastic and untimely had happened before. Arleen Blum attributes this to the men finding it beneath their dignity to take orders from women and the examples of sexual harassment given seem to confirm this.

The extent of the patriarchal hold on Sherpa society had also been revealed when the expedition attempted to employ Sherpanis. The intention was to provide

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the women with the opportunity to develop their climbing skills, to give them the chance of prestigious and relatively highly paid jobs as high altitude porters. But it was inappropriate for these well-intentioned progressive Westerners to impose their feminist notions on another culture, and in the event it turned out to be disastrous. Arlene Blum concedes that it was naive to imagine they could bring changes into these women's lives, knowing what resistance the idea of an all-women climb had generated in their own.

Underpinning this question is the problem posed for all Western climbers of enjoying their sporting adventures in developing countries. This emerges sharply in the controversy over whether or not the validity of their expedition as an all-women effort would be jeopardised if male Sherpas were allowed to accompany them to the summit. While all expeditions are faced with the contradiction of using Sherpas as porters and paid servants, the controversy over gender on the Annapurna made the contradictions, and the Sherpas, more visible. But although the question of the patronage of the Nepalese people by Western climbing expeditions emerges from the text, it is not dealt with — ironic, when it was the women's desire to escape from 'the grown ups', the patronising male climbing community, that in part generated this expedition.

Age proved to be no barrier for the climbers; the oldest woman was 53, the youngest 21. All 13 were either childless or with older children, and the expedition could attract no women with young children. Arleen Blum raises the important point that the age when mountaineers are said to be at their peak, the mid and late 30s, coincides with the time when most women are involved in child rearing. Another disadvantage. This accounts for the strong tradition of women in this country climbing in their 40s and 50s.

The paperback edition of this book appears at an appropriate moment. There has been an explosion of women's high altitude climbing. The women's expedition to Annapurna, and the Alison Chadwick and Vera Watson Memorial Fund set up to aid high altitude women's climbing have played a major part in encouraging this trend. The climb has become a milestone in women's climbing, and the book which records it will remain a reference point for others and hopefully an inspiration to all women.

Maria Loftus and Maggie Urmston



Pluto Crime

October Heat

Gordon de Marco, *Pluto* £2.95

Morbid Symptoms

Gillian Slovo, *Pluto* £2.95

Murder in the Central Committee

Manuel Vazquez Montalban, *Pluto* £3.50

The China Option

Nancy Milton, *Pluto* £3.50

Crime fiction is a particularly appropriate form for the exploration of political ideas because it deals with two elements of human behaviour which are central to politics — power and appearances: power, as exercised by the state, by employers, by men over women or by individuals over each other, ultimately embodied in violence or 'crime'; and appearances — which the reader is deceived by, and the investigator must unravel. As a mass cultural form, replete with symbolic meanings, the crime thriller is comparable with romantic fiction in its ideological and psychological power.

Presumably in recognition of this fact Pluto Press have launched a new series of political crime thrillers ('Pluto Crime'), of which four have already been published. It's a good idea, so it is unfortunate that three of the four fall short of convincing either as fiction or as politics. The fourth (*The China Option* by Nancy Milton) really belongs to a different genre altogether, that of the political thriller au Carré.

Each of the other three books in the series takes a simple 'who dunnit?' plot and places it in a politically charged historical venue. *October Heat* (Gordon de Marco) is a Chanderlesque story of investigation and political intrigue in 1930s San Francisco. A routine case of blackmail

takes private eye Riley Kovachs down a trail which leads to an underground fascist organisation financed by right-wing politicians and anti-union bosses, and an assassination plot. It is a fascinating historical moment, but this in itself is not enough to inject any excitement into this lifeless tale.

October Heat fluctuates between crude political tract with a simple moral — virtue equals sticking up for the 'little guy' — and an amateurish exercise in Chandler imitation, the dialogue an unconvincing pastiche of the Marlowe style, the characterisation banal, and the plot simply failing to thrill. De Marco breaks some pretty basic rules of crime writing: he gets us feeling that Kovachs is a lot less bright than the average private eye, and that we are being led up obvious blind alleys in order to throw us off the scent. As a result the constant reference to historical events and persons (there is even an interview with Charlie Chaplin at one point) begins to seem like desperate attempts to give some adventitious solidity to this insubstantial story.

The second of the series, *Morbid Symptoms*, situates its tale of crime and discovery in the contemporary world of left-wing, alternative, middle-class London, with a plot involving an agreement between South Africa and Argentina to develop nuclear weapons. Kate Baeier, 'feminist, sex-playing journalist', is hired to investigate the demise of a researcher on a radical third world economic review. The investigation takes us through a sort of Chaucer's Prologue of North London's radical chic scene. The plot is unexciting and unconvincing, and the main burden of the book is located in the political and cultural environment in which these familiar characters move. The narrative teeters perpetually between the candid and the

caricature — it's difficult to take these people seriously, and yet they are more embarrassing than funny; the dialogue somehow manages to be both slapstick and pedestrian. The contemporary cultural signals turn out to be little more than gimmicks to sell a poor story, and Kate Baeier to be less than a match for her prototype in P D James' *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*.

Murder in the Central Committee, the third in the series, is a more considerable book. The story of veteran detective Pepe Carvalho's investigation of the murder of the Spanish Communist Party general secretary is set against a background of the struggle within the party between the 'Euros' and the 'old guard'. The plot is both intriguing — the assassination takes place during a blackout in a closed meeting of the central committee — and full of political resonances. Unlike Riley Kovachs or Kate Baeier, Pepe Carvalho knows how to conduct an investigation: always keeping just a step or two ahead of the reader, and reconstructing the scenario bit by bit instead of all at once in the last six pages.

It's a rough-hewn narrative however,

strewn with inconsequential 'formula' scenes, with mysterious would-be assassins gratuitously thrown in Carvalho's path apparently only in order to reveal his prowess in self-defence, and nuggets of undigested recipe-book to demonstrate his skill as a chef. The political debate which forms the story's backdrop never becomes more than that — it doesn't affect the course of the investigation and it's never really articulated by any of the characters. And Montalban is content for his hero to conform completely to the stereotype macho Latin male: Carvalho likes women in the same way he enjoys food or wine, and the — again formula — 'love scenes' are offensive. Despite its narrative energy and the quality of the writing, **Murder in the Central Committee** ultimately doesn't come off.

The last of the four, Nancy Milton's **The China Option**, unquestionably does come off. It is set in a China seething with unrest, which is being ensnared into a military alliance with the US as a ploy against the Russians. Anne Campbell, China correspondent of the *Washington Inquirer*, eventually stumbles on a secret US plan to arm China with nuclear

weapons. The ensuing furore results in the defeat of the hawks in the US administration and the reversal of its China policy. Whether she is describing the cynical manoeuvres of super-power politics or the details of everyday life in Beijing, Nancy Milton's writing is powerful and convincing. Anne Campbell is a far more vivid and likeable character than any the other books have to offer.

The very best crime fiction writers have shown that it is possible to use crime fiction for the expression of political ideas, but also that you can't do it just by pinning a thriller plot onto a 'political' backdrop. The first requirement of a crime thriller is that it should work on that level — the characters must live, and the narrative must keep you on the edge of your seat from beginning to end. Writers like Patricia Highsmith or William McIlvanney are also able to make their characters — and their readers — grow, as the unravelling of the plot takes them through a realised labyrinth or personal and political discovery. Let's hope that future additions to the Pluto series will reveal new talents of this kind.

John Millner

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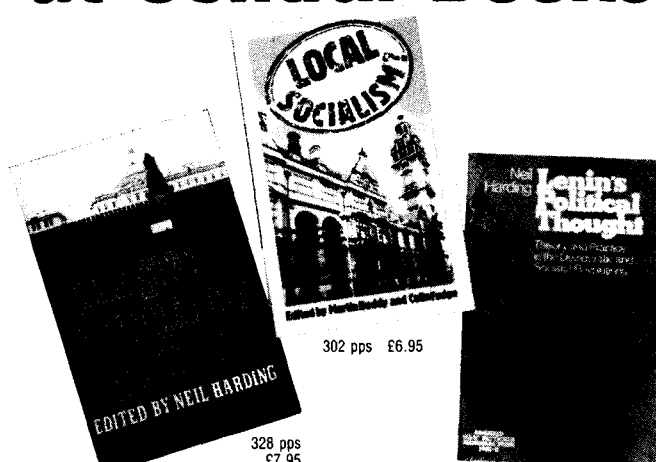
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● Gordon Robinson considers the contribution of Enrico Berlinguer.

● Nick Lewis asks what role does class play in British politics.

GORDON ROBINSON Berlinguer: Architect of Eurocommunism



We are not yet able properly to evaluate the contribution made by Enrico Berlinguer, discussed in the July *Marxism Today* by Donald Sassoon. Certain areas of his thinking, however, deserve to be more widely known. I would like to touch on three which seem to be closely linked: the acceleration and universalisation of the revolutionary process, the relative 'exhaustion' of the Soviet model, and the moral and ethical revolution called for by what Togliatti once referred to as 'the change in the structure of the world'.

It is no coincidence that the period of maximum postwar expansion of the PCI's influence is, as it was in an earlier time of rapid growth (1943-1947), tied to the emergence of new and powerful progressive currents in the world. Eurocommunism, as Berlinguer saw it, was organically linked to the new stage of the crisis of imperialism whose effects were being felt in a very particular way in the advanced capitalist countries. The slow radicalisation of social democracy, the peace and feminist movements, movements in defence of the environment, plus the increased combativity of the working class, were all symptoms of growing anti-capitalist insubordination, or what Giuseppe Vacca has called the new and more advanced protagonism of the masses. Eurocommunism was not the brainchild of a group of 'enlightened' revolutionaries, or even 'reformist opportunism'. It was the organic product of the acceleration of the world revolutionary process, being one of the precise forms which it took in Western Europe. It was in itself an outgrowth of the new and broader forms of anti-capitalist protagonism brought on by the crisis.

The form of revolutionary transition was therefore bound to be different in countries like Italy. But if the road to socialism was to be different, so also was the destination. It is a commonplace to

reiterate Berlinguer's rejection of the Soviet model as unsuitable for Western Europe. Not only because certain aspects of it offended against revolutionary and democratic sentiments, but also, and perhaps more significantly, because uncritical endorsement of it would weaken the democratic thrust of the movement and impede the fullest mobilisation of those new and extended forms of combativity which were now making themselves evident.

The decomposition of the imperialist system, and the 'exhaustion' of the Soviet model were both related to changes in the 'structure of the world'. In a manner reminiscent of Tito, Berlinguer grasped the crisis of 'bloc politics', and sought a way out which was both democratic and revolutionary. The liberation struggle in the Third World meant a fight against imperialism and the 'politics of power'. It meant a new economic order, new international institutions, and a fairer and more rigorous use of the world's resources. Extreme political instability arising from imperialist plunder, and with it the grave danger of war, were powerful reasons for Berlinguer and the PCI's active diplomacy in this area.

But the challenge of underdevelopment did not only involve the imperial ruling classes and the neo-colonies. It had considerable importance for the whole of capitalist society. If socialist transition was to take place in the context of the global reallocation of resources, then it demanded qualitative changes in the objectives of the working class and democratic movements. Revolution in the heartlands of imperialism would not only carry away the bankers, the capitalists and the landlords. It would attack the molecular forms of capitalist and imperialist domination. It would have to wear away attitudes born of centuries of imperialist ascendancy; individualism of the most extreme kind, class corporatism, sectionalism, racism, sexism. Revolution in countries such as Italy, and indeed Britain, would have to set itself a political and moral agenda of a vigorous and elevated character.

Some of Berlinguer's most impassioned speeches were assaults on the degenerative and morbid character of late bourgeois culture; its love affair with death, its fascination with violence, its propensity to escapism. Perhaps more than any of his communist contemporaries, Berlinguer raised the question of the moral as well as political aspect of socialism, and why he was so attached to personal rigour and responsibility. It was why he sought a socialism which was not only combative, but also deeply democratic, one which was bound together by the spirit and practice of collectivism and solidarity.

Berlinguer's death has deprived the Italian people of an outstanding leader. He will be missed not only by Communists and the party's supporters, but also by the millions who saw in him a symbol of honesty and integrity; qualities which are very rare among those who have governed Italy since the war. His epitaph is perhaps in the words of Sandro Pertini, the President of Italy: 'I have lost a son, a brother, a comrade in the struggle'.



NICK LEWIS
Class conundrum



Gregor McLennan (in the May issue of *Marxism Today*) argues against basing poli-

tics on class. He rejects class interest as a foundation for socialist politics, and advocates instead a plurality of class and non-class concerns.

An initial response might be to ask: What is the point of Gregor's exercise? It leaves us with little that is recognisably socialist, and still less that is recognisably Marxist. If a pluralist amalgam should succeed in replacing Thatcherism, why would it not produce an even worse botch-up than Callaghan's pragmatism, and an even more right wing government as a response?

Like Hobsbawm, however, McLennan starts with a simple truth, until recently unnoticed by Labour leaders; we no longer have the old working class. Instead we have a new one. But it is proposed that the old, manual, working class can hardly be said to have had a common class interest, and that the new, often non-manual and service based class definitely does not have one. I would disagree with both these propositions.

McLennan claims that Marxists have traditionally emphasised a direct, spontaneously determined connection between experience in production and sense — or consciousness — of class interest. Yet Marx appears to have regarded industrial

disputes as just one part of the developing of a class politics quite distinct from impromptu competitive skirmishes based on wage labour within capitalism. At one point (in 1879) Engels got so bored with English strikes that he advised Bernstein that he could learn nothing from them.

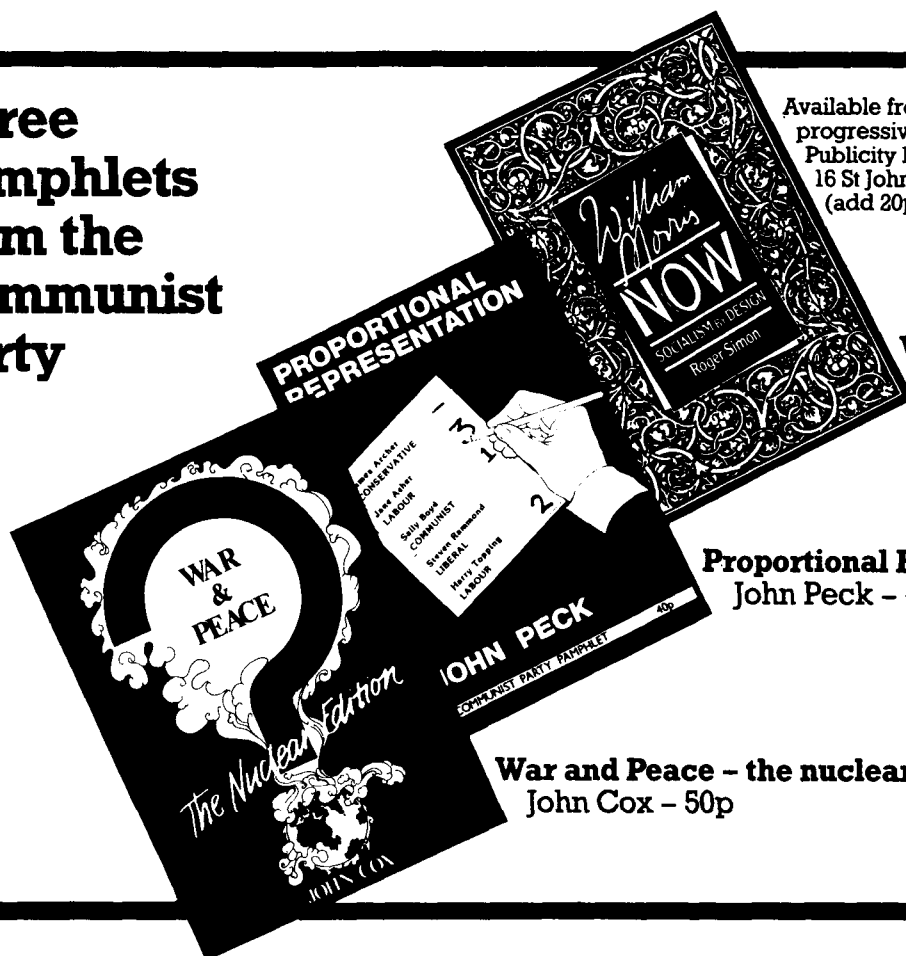
The problem for the Left, then, is not, as Gregor somewhat self contradictorily proposes, to 'mobilise the people into self-activity'. We need a politics which indicates answers to the problems posed in the course of self-activity. And if members of the (changed) working class still purvey wage or salaried labour to a class which exploits it, then it seems unlikely that they could be in a position to work out together the answers to the problem of how society should be run without following their manifest political interest to end that class status.

One can now take an opposite view to McLennan's of the changed nature of the working class. At least 52% of those at work in Britain are now in non-manual jobs. But doesn't this fact allow us to get beyond the image of a class of doers who must forever be thought for, represented, or administered? Why should administrators not be more amenable, rather than less

so, to the socialist argument that workers' interests lie in running their own services or industries? Are not nurses or teachers more, not less, able to perceive the incongruity between a non-capitalist service and the capitalist priorities and controls under which they work? Why shouldn't the breaking down of the oppressive and divisive relations between the sexes not afford a better opportunity to perceive a common class interest? Have those in the new white collar and service jobs shown any more reluctance than manual workers to join unions or elect left-wing leaders within them?

Finally, we find that McLennan's 'non-class' issues — the more global, political, issues — seem actually to go much nearer than, for instance, wage conflicts to the heart of class interests. Is peace really a non-class issue? It is difficult to understand why each side in the cold war is so concerned to maintain and deter an external threat if not for the purposes of internal control. Is democracy a non-class issue? In whose interests is, for instance, an extension of democracy into the area of information, or into economic enterprises? Undoubtedly, we are all affected by these issues; but in different ways, according to class.

Three pamphlets from the Communist Party



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William Morris Now
Roger Simon — £1.00

Proportional Representation
John Peck — 40p

War and Peace — the nuclear edition
John Cox — 50p

Letters

OLYMPIC SPOILSPORTS

Whilst the apparatchiks of the Soviet Foreign Office have been applauding the Olympic boycott, Jim Riordan (MT, July 84) had the sense to point out that the only winners in this attempt to disrupt the Games will be the West's propaganda machine.

His article links up well with the points made by Rosalind Brunt – 'the prevailing image of the Left as a rancorous lot of spoilsports'. Most of my friends on the Left view the Olympics as an awkward incursion into their round of meetings, canvassing and paper sales. Who's going to be interested in the latest step backwards in the Forward March of Labour when Britain's finest are racing for Gold? To admit to enjoying such a spectacle is to confess a heresy.

The boycotts, and other problems, will continue so long as national chauvinism is allowed to prevail. But how do we transform that chauvinism into the harmless but essential national consciousness Eric Hobsbawm rightly sees as part of the Left's future? The answer lies in seeing collective participation as the basis for all sporting events. That way the Olympics become a mere part of a far wider system and the celebration focuses on the event instead of the particular flag being hoisted at the victory ceremony.

Mark Perryman,
Dudley,
West Midlands.

GREENS AND REDS

As a member of the Ecology Party I was fascinated to read Geoff Hodgson's critique (MT, June '84) of statist socialism. The thinking of Bahro and Gorz in mainland Europe is clearly spreading to the UK, and this could open up exciting possibilities for further cooperation between the left, radical and Green wings of British politics on single issue campaigns related to defence, nuclear power, transport and PR, to name a few.

More difficult for those on the Left with a traditional outlook will be the Green movement's fundamental rejection of several sacred cows, notably economic growth and the centralisation of political and economic power which Hodgson so rightly criticises. Nevertheless, is it too much to hope that the thoughtful and constructive articles we have seen in *Marxism Today* in recent months could be a pointer towards the long term electoral potential of a

realignment of political forces initiated by their wish to transform our exploitative consumer society?

David Spaven, London

GAMBLING WITH THE TORY VOTE

John Ross (MT Viewpoint, July '84) is just a little too eager to advance his claim that Andrew Gamble has undermined 'the entire previous line of the journal'.

Ross's argument seems to me to be wrong for three reasons. Firstly, while it is true that the Tory vote did decline from 1931 to 1983, the analysis of Thatcherism as a distinctive political force refers only to the 1970s and 1980s. In this period, it is clear from Ross's figures that the Tory vote rose dramatically from its low point in October 1974 – 36% of votes cast – to 44% in 1979. Indeed, it is also clear from Ross's figures that this is the biggest jump in the Tory vote between any two elections since 1931.

Secondly, the evidence for Thatcherism as a distinctive ideology and political force does not consist simply of election figures, and therefore, it cannot be attacked simply by the use of such figures. Opinion poll data on issues such as nationalisation, trade union power, social security, council housing, law and order and unemployment showed a trend to the right throughout the 1970s even amongst Labour voters. The success of Thatcherism must therefore be measured by a combination of items – voting, opinions, etc. – and not solely by the superficial indicator of General Election statistics, revealing though these undoubtedly are.

Thirdly, the success of Thatcherism should be measured not only by the organisation of its own historic bloc, but by its disorganisation of potential opposition. In this respect it has been remarkably successful and now confronts an opposition (measured in electoral terms) which is deeply divided between Labour and the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

John Kelly, London

REPUBLICANS

We in *Republic* were very interested to read Rosalind Brunt's article on the British royal family's popularity (*Marxism Today*, July, 1984) and should like to make two main points:

(1) As far as we know, no surveys of attitudes to the monarchy have asked respondents to give their views after reading a serious case

against the monarchy and summary of viable alternatives which would not violently flout British traditions and law. One of our aims is to suggest and publicise such alternatives, including those proposed by the Communist Party of Great Britain which, alone among the long-established political parties, includes the abolition of the monarchy in its policy-statements.

(2) The article states that there is no anti-royalist organisation of any significance. Well, *Republic* has only been in being since October 1983, but awareness of it as a pressure group, devoted to the revival and promotion of the idea of republicanism in this country and everywhere else, is beginning to catch on. You, Ms Brunt and your readers may like to find out more by writing to the Joint Secretaries, *Republic*, 55a Netley Rd, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG2 7NR (Tel: 01-554 8848).

Arthur Standley,
Ilford

THE THING ITSELF

Micheline Wandor expresses the attitude of MT when she writes (MT July 84): "In left-wing journalism poetry is feared or dismissed as bourgeois individualism and discounted by radical publishers as 'not selling'." Her articles are the closest thing to poetry it prints. With few outlets for 'political' poetry in the UK, radical journals frequently declare their commitment to it as a resource for the Left, yet only publish prose. This country's tradition of political verse stretches back past Milton, yet left-wing journalists direct our attention to those writers who achieved success through and after Punk. That many of these have revived some of the most banal poetic forms receives no comment.

Many poets show 'streetwise verbal richness' (Adrian Mitchell, Roy Fisher, Tom Pickard, Geraldine Monk, Barry MacSweeney, Duncan Bush) but are interested in more than streetsense. These and other writers are attempting to deconstruct the realities of capitalism with language, and to construct new modes of thought and relationship which will hasten the material advance of Socialism. Yet, Mitchell excepted, no interest is shown in their work by those ostensibly devoted to all forms of radicalism. What of the radicalisation of language? If poetry is a valid tool for the Left, why do those who could facilitate its publication reject it 'because it takes up too much space'? Space is

given to those poets popular among London's radical chic: is success therefore the definitive measure of value? Success in a publishing system obsessed with profitability, despite 'radical' publishing. That poetry should be subject to constraints applied to no other form of language: that it be as self-explanatory as a cartoon and as lucrative as a pop-song; shows an immaturity in the perception of poetry that magazines like MT should attempt to change by publishing not articles about poetry but the thing itself.

Keith Jafrate,
North Yorkshire

We welcome your letters for the September issue. They should be no longer than 250 words and arrive at the office not later than 3 August.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Keith Dixon teaches at Grenoble University and is a member of the PCF. Christian Wolmar is a freelance journalist.

Ruth Evans is co-ordinator of the Maternity Alliance.

Charles Ashleigh is a historian and commentator on South Asian affairs.

Victoria Brittain is the editor of the *Guardian's* Third World Review.

David Green is senior lecturer in economics at South Bank Polytechnic and a member of the Communist Party London District Committee.

Jennifer Hargreaves is senior lecturer in sports studies at the Roehampton Institute and edited *Sport, Culture and Ideology*.

Clive Thornton was, until recently, chairman of Mirror Group Newspapers.

Christopher Hird is a journalist currently working on Channel 4's *Diverse Reports*.

Gareth Locksley and Richard Minns work in the Industry and Employment Branch at the GLC and write in their personal capacities.

Richard Dyer lectures in film studies at Warwick University.

Brian Hipkin is senior lecturer in sociology at City of London Polytechnic.

Simon Lockwood is a member of the pop group *See You in Vegas*.

Stephen Hayward works in publishing.

Maria Loftus and Maggie Urmstone are both teachers and members of North London Mountaineering Club. John Millner is an avid crime thriller reader.

Gordon Robinson teaches West European politics at Birmingham Polytechnic and is a member of the Communist Party.

Nick Lewis is a member of the Socialist Society Steering Committee.

NEWS

Socialism in London The Socialist Society is organising a series of meetings for the autumn on the lessons of the GLC and the Labour London Boroughs, starting on October 3rd. Anyone interested in helping to organise the series from whatever background in the Socialist movement should contact Nick Lewis 01-671 8702 or Theo Dennison 01-692 4998.

Tamil Information Centre Set up to monitor and provide information on atrocities and human rights violations on Tamils in Sri Lanka. Attacks on Tamils in the Sinhala area last summer were a prelude to the 'Biafran' style operation by the regular army against the Tamils in their traditional homelands since. A bulletin and further information is available from 1 Beulah Rd, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR4 8JH (01-653 0506).

CAMPAIGNS

Family Policy Last year's leaks from the family policy group and reassertion of Victorian values has led to a demand for positive ideas on the shape of an alternative family policy. Nine unions have combined with the Child Poverty Action Group to campaign on this issue and have produced a leaflet to promote discussion of men and women's differently perceived responsibilities and their impact on their lives as both workers and trade union members. The leaflet (price 25p or £2.00 for 20) and further information can be obtained from CPAG, 1 Macklin St, London WC2 (01-242 3225/9149).

MEETINGS

Creeping Socialism? 14 August (Tues) Discussion on the relevance of Workers Investment Funds in the pursuit of a socialist economy, organised by the Socialist Society Strategy for Socialism Working Group. All are welcome. 7.30pm, County Hall, London. Further details - Theo Dennison 01-692 4998 or 734 850.

EVENTS

The Roots of Peace Festival 13-18 August. Organised by Peace Pledge Union (Britain's secular pacifist organisation). It will include an exhibition of their work, discussions and workshops on issues of current concern. Also, co-operative games sessions plus films, stalls, food and creche. St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Sq London. 11.30am to 9.00pm. Wheelchair access.



Further details from PPU 01-387 5501.

Africa Centre 20th Anniversary Weekend 17-18 August. This will include three main events: on Friday two live bands, African Dawn and Dade Krama, on Saturday "The Lost Years" - a debate on Africa (12-3pm) to be followed by a party from 9pm, at 38 King St, Covent Garden, London WC2. £3.00 for music and party. Further details from 01-836 1973.

Kwame Nkrumah & Pan Africanism 1 September. A symposium to assess the Ghanaian leader's role in Africa and his concept of African history. Fee £10 (£3.00 unwaged) at the Jehanger Room, Commonwealth Institute, London 01-603 4535 ext 230.

Peace Rally at Chapelcross Nuclear Power Station 4 August. Assemble in Annan at 11.00 to march to Chapelcross. Speakers include Margaret Morton, Scottish CND Sec, Billy Rolfe, Scottish National Party, Bob Winter, Labour Party and NUM representative. Entertainment and concert featuring Wild Cat Theatre Company 1.00-5.00 in Annan.

Peace Gathering Creys-Malville France. 4-5 Aug. Those holidaying in France may like to join in this protest on the site of the French fast breeder nuclear plant. Information from Jeremy, Scram Nonviolent Action Group, 11 Forth St, Edinburgh.

African Music Village 1-4 Aug. To introduce British audiences to African music in a way which is

impossible in conventional concert hall settings. Organised jointly by the Commonwealth Institute, the GLC and Capital Radio. Traditional African musicians performing alongside black British musicians including Dudu Pukwana and Orchestre Jazira. At Holland Park. Tickets £2.00 (50p unwaged and disabled). Further details 01-603 4535.

Miner Poets 1 Aug. Special poetry event in aid of the NUM. Readings by Dannie Abse, African Dawn, Lynton Kwesi Johnson and others. Financed partly by the GLC. At the Purcell Room, South Bank, SE1. Admission £2.00 (concessions for group bookings). Contact 01-928 3641.

FILMS, VIDEO

What they telling us it's illegal for? To coincide with the Parliamentary debate on copyright laws and the proposed introduction of a levy on blank tape, Birmingham Film & Video Workshop have produced a programme which presents the issue from the perspective of young people searching out and gaining access to information and decision making on an area which directly affects them. 40 mins long and available from BFVW, Holt St, Birmingham B7 4BA 021-359 5545/4192.

Council Matters is an animated film which looks at rates and services through the eyes of Freda (a cleaner) who wittily presents insights as to what a local council does or could do. It also presents the 'nightmare' of a privatised service. Ten minutes long, it is available for

hire on video, VHS, and 16mm. £5.00. From the Local Campaign Unit, 5/7 Tavistock Place, London WC1H or 01-387 9893.

The Monkey and the Dragon is a British group who distribute radical American radio tapes which promote discussion about feminism, environmental and nuclear issues amongst others. Titles include: The Politics of Jazz, Sex in the Bathtub, An interview with Marge Piercy. More information from The Monkey & the Dragon, Tweed ST, High Bentham, Lancaster LA2 7HW.

PUBLICATIONS

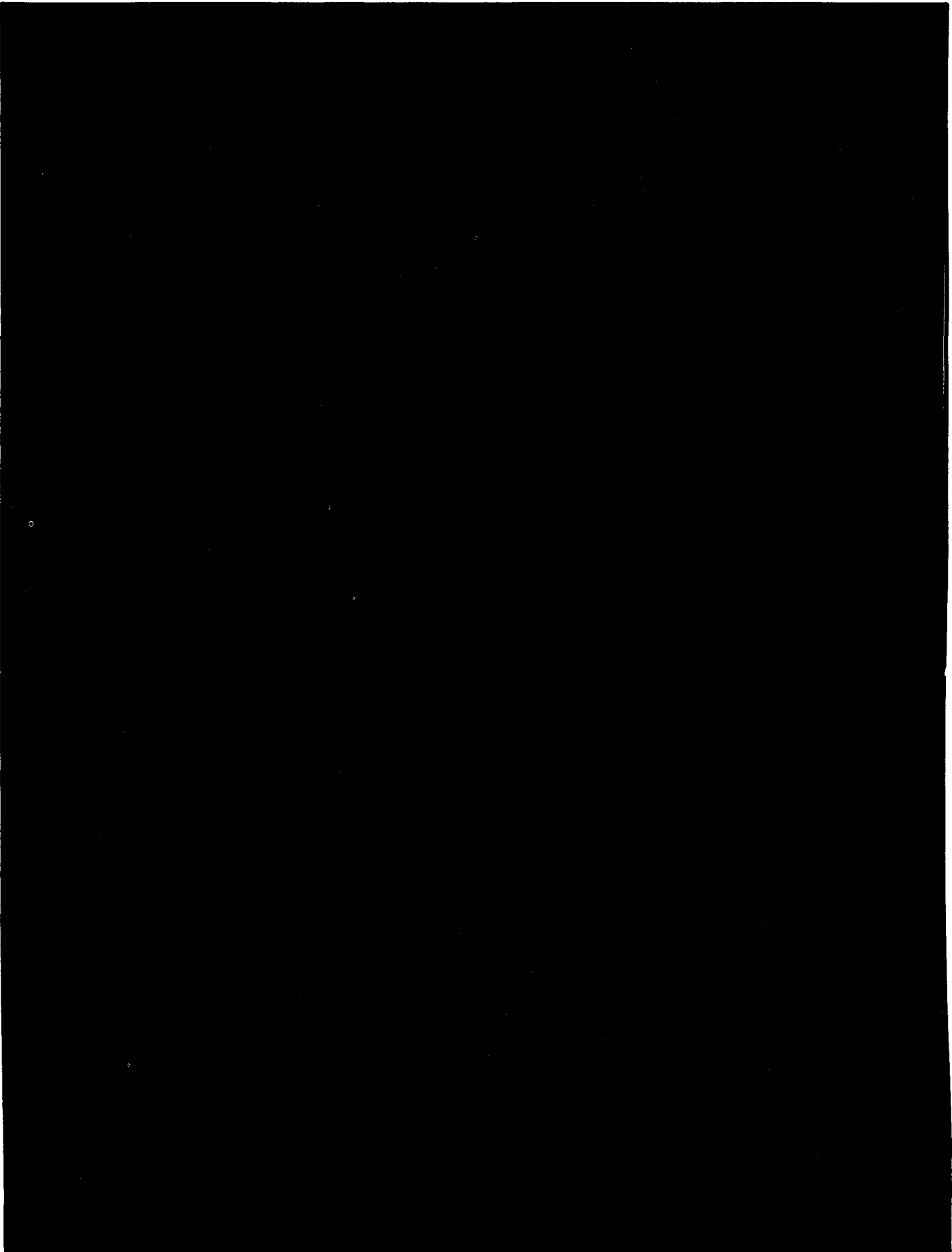
Defending the NHS The most comprehensive union publication yet on the state of the Health Service. Produced by the Labour Research Dept it includes detailed studies of successful local campaigns linking trade unions with community groups in Scotland, Brent, Oxford and Sheffield. Available from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1 8HF. Price £1.00 inc p&p.

New Ground Third issue, produced by the Socialist Environment & Resources Association, focusing on the environmental Left in France. Available from SERA, 9 Poland St, London W1. Price 50p. Annual subscription £2 for 4 issues.

Occupational Pensions Carl Jones argues that the portable pensions the Government may introduce will not remedy the insecurity and inequity of occupational schemes and considers the possible alternative way of ensuring, through improvements in public provision, adequate and secure pensions for all. Published by the Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth St, London SW1H 9BN. Price £1.50.

Haldane Society's Employment Law Bulletin. Summer edition contains a strong attack on the unsatisfactory state of the law regarding health and safety in the NHS, analyses the extension of the government's anti union laws in the Dimpleby-NUJ case and examines the likely effects of the new and inadequate equal pay for work of equal value regulations. Available from 177 Holland Rd, London NW1. Price £4.00 per year.

Entries for the September Update should be sent as soon as possible (latest date Friday 3 August) to Maria Loftus, Marxism Today 16 St John Street London EC1 or tel 01-251 4406 or 01-607 3344 (evenings).



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